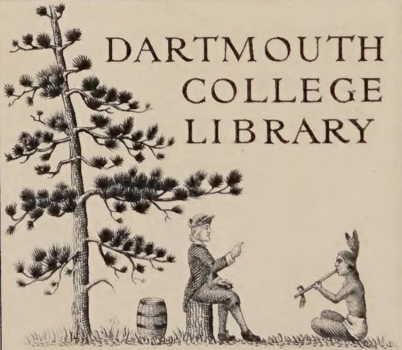

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THE MEANING OF ART

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BY

A. PHILIP McMAHON

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To

AUDREY McMAHON

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THE MEANING OF ART

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A question that is crucial for modern civilization is this: What does art mean? How does it find a place in the scheme of our thoughts and actions? At different times various answers have been given to the problem. The positive presumptions underlying the conception that prevails today have come down to us from some of the world's greatest thinkers, and many of our perplexities in explaining art are due to the fact that we ignore the logical implications of those presumptions. It is quite possible that the word *art* conceals ideas and beliefs that are hostile to the structure of our modern world, and if that is the fact, we ought to realize it. On the other hand, it seems probable that if we trace the origins of the prevailing conception and we carefully study the more important explanations of what art means, some of the intellectual doubts that distress us today, and some of the most profound sources of our discontent, may be relieved.

We need only to admit a few rather obvious observations. Before we can properly inquire into the meaning of art we need to acknowledge: first, that there are things termed objects of fine art; second, that as products of human activity, these objects belong to an ascertainable historical sequence. In other words, there are such things as objects of art and these things have a history.

The meaning of art can hardly be discovered if study is confined to the abstract concept of beauty. By attempting to follow the historical development of art and ideas about art we can in a measure emancipate ourselves from too easy dogmatism. When we analyze critically the content of the standard explanations of art, and compare those explanations with relevant art objects, we need no longer acccept unmastered substitutes for thought. The widely accepted formulas were long ago won at great cost, but they are cheapened and debased when a mere form of words, brief enough to be quickly memorized and repeated with impassioned persistence, is adopted as in itself sufficient truth.

"Art is imitation," "art is illusion," "art is expression," "art is harmonious proportion," "art is a criticism of life," are all familiar examples of substitutes for thought. Each one is frequently advanced as superseding all the rest. In conversations about art, judgments of this sort are bound to occur, but rarely is there any knowledge of the dogma's origin and implications, or ability to justify its intelligible use.

In proportion to a speaker's ignorance of the historical context and the philosophical significance of the formula he employs, he is apt to assert it as a self-evident truth, the very center of the soul's confidence in itself. In beliefs about art, as in those about religion and the nature of the state, prejudice assumes a familiar pattern: If I have an idea and I do not know where I got it, it must be my very own; since I have this idea and no other, it alone must be true for all the world as it clearly works for me.

Nothing tends to eliminate utter blindness in prejudice so much as a critical comparison of established dogmas, considered in the historical setting of their origins. When we study the art of civilizations separated from our own in time and space, we are led to re-examine critically our favorite formulas, because of the contradictions and differences that art presents. There is change throughout the artistic development of any one land or race, yet there is a general agreement, a group preference adequate to constitute a distinct style in every period of time, so that chronological and geographical study of art and opinion about art must shake confidence derived from unquestioning belief. Works of art viewed in the temporal and spatial environments to which they belong should generate a healthy scepticism, the eventual remedy for prejudice compounded into formula.

To rely on historical materials is both more difficult and more profitable than to launch out with the declaration that our effort to determine the meaning of art is absolutely new and pays no regard to anything that has ever been done before. Even explorers build their ships, stock them with provisions, and equip themselves with weapons in the land from which they depart. We delude ourselves, imagining that we can escape completely from our origins, or supposing we shall reach our goal with entirely different bodies and minds. Radical pessimism and radical indifference cannot, indeed, deter people from studying the art of the past and being influenced by it, or from thinking past thoughts and incorporating them into their own. Historical material is in any case inevitably employed, and more helpful when appreciated as such. When we overlook history we slight an integral element even in speculative thought. When we admit its cogency we are aided in ascertaining the intrinsic worth of ideas, offered in the shape of generalized formulas.

A sound method, one patterned after the actual process of history, should be reciprocal; collections of things classified as art must constantly be tested by tentatively adopted principles. On the other hand, these principles must be able to survive recurring test through reference to such collected objects. Simple classification alone does not provide a final solution of the problems of art, nor does a mathematically clear concept. Individual products may be ruled out of consideration on the ground that they do not fall within the class designated as art; but then the disturbing question arises: How and why, though in error, did people ever fancy that this thing was art? Definitions and theories may be discarded as too full of logical contradictions, but then we must face the question: How, with such illogical formulas, did those who believed them ever produce any art?

In dealing with the important definitions accepted in the history of thinking about art, it should prove helpful to cite objects which are relevant to each theory and serve to vindicate its claims, particularly those works which were produced during times when the theory prevailed. But objects which might be discussed by an opponent of the principle in question must also be considered. Finally, to avoid sterile verbal constructions, some art works which are secured through chance, or those which occur most frequently, must be analyzed, for there should be no accidents to our theories because our instances have been obtained at random. A program of this kind may lead to indignation or despair, but assuming the existence of a mind to begin with, and granting that there are such things as art works, a willingness to be put to some effort for the sake of a greater good makes education possible in and through art. A method admitting instances chosen at random may deliver the student from the geometrical patterns of formal logic, which achieve a stability for thought by sacrificing the possibility of change and reducing the extension of the field in which thought is to act.

While the several principles that explain art may be applied to all its manifestations, our main reliance will be on the plastic arts, especially painting and sculpture. As fine arts, painting and sculpture are among the most primitive in origin and were early realized to be different in significant ways from the applied art found in decorated cooking vessels and embroidered garments. When we discuss the plastic arts we are not apt, as we so often are in discussing literature, to confuse written or spoken language, the chief vehicle of human communication, with the substance of the art in painting and sculpture. Again, specific objects of plastic art are more constant and concise objects of reference when two or more persons desire to exchange thoughts about art in the presence of an example. But this preference or superior convenience will not result in leaving out all consideration of other kinds of art products, for some principles which are tolerably satisfactory as explanations of sculpture may not be so when referred to lyric verse or music.

Undeniably, if we attempt to reach a genuine meaning for art in the manner here suggested, there is the risk of confusion as well as an imperative demand for intelligent effort on our part. But to believe that the odds are slightly more in favor of reason and order than in favor of luck and chance, to endeavor to discover the meaning of art through patient, serious, persistent thought, is to be capable of education. Even if art proves to be only a sophisticated indulgence and a passive enjoyment, a vehicle for impressing venerated and safe doctrine on school-children's minds, the ornamental decorations of a hollow metaphysical edifice, or a group of contradictory concepts concealed beneath the shelter of a word, it is worth while to know that that is all art means. At the very minimum, the experience of getting at any satisfactory meaning through an examination of the historical context and the positive content of the accepted formulas is a fascinating exercise for the hounds and hares of the mind.

But before we can fairly undertake to analyze and test the commonly accepted meanings of art, we must ask the previous question, one that must be answered before real progress is possible. We must inquire: Can art have meaning?

CHAPTER II

CAN ART HAVE MEANING?

When we search for meaning we are inquiring into what is real in the object of thought. The general process by which we reach meanings is through discrimination and association. We find the real in thought by separating from it what is irrelevant, improper, or erroneous, on the one hand, and, on the other, by combining it with what is properly and genuinely related to it. Discrimination and association are both integral parts of the activity by which we establish what is real, and to omit or exaggerate either aspect is to miss our goal.

It is impossible for human beings really to believe that meaning when found should be an obstruction instead of an aid in establishing happy relations with ourselves and the world we live in. Yet we almost always overemphasize either discrimination or association so that the aim of establishing proper relations is never quite achieved. We sometimes treat the effect of art as if it were the meaning of art, but effects are tests and trials of meaning rather than meaning itself. The state of feeling, the emotional tone stimulated by works of art, or by emotive mental images, is also frequently declared to be the essence of art. Both these views result from defective discrimination and uncritical association.

In discourse we are, moreover, compelled to substitute partially logical symbols for the actual richness of experience. We cannot, in the nature of the case, completely avoid the manipulation of logical symbols, combined in a system only because a part of the value of each symbol has been pared off to make it fit into the whole scheme. The irregular shapes of concepts somehow corresponding to experience have been trimmed down so that they can be brought together in a rigid, durable structure with the formal consistency of an architectural edifice. That production may weather the stresses and strains of the syllogism, but as a whole it may also be simply a coherent untruth. It makes no allowance for future changes, and most philosophies of art, indeed, adequately explain only one section of ancient Greek art.

Types of Definition

The problem of definition is included in a quest for meaning. The fact is not so apparent in most modern works devoted to ideas, as it is in theoretical discussions down to the latter part of the nineteenth century, although in Greek philosophy it is often the chief topic. Art, however, is a constant stimulus to speculation. There seems to be a natural alliance between the fine arts and metaphysics, so that a customary introduction to books like this is to lament the obscurity, vagueness, or error of the prevailing definitions. The easiest way out of the difficulty is to coin a new word to which only a carefully qualified meaning is to be attached.

Centuries of worrying about this question have produced three principal types of definition, methods by which the exchange value of words is to be fixed, and the currency of ideas is to be stabilized on a gold basis. One method is that of Aristotle, illustrated by his definition of tragedy. It relies on description and classification. It points out the genus or superior class to which the species belongs, an act of association. It distinguishes the differences which separate the given species from others in the same genus, an act of discrimination.

A second type of definition functions through the collection of essential marks, signs or characteristics, of which the thing to be defined is an aggregate. This is a great comfort to mathematics and it permits us to test hypotheses, because we can thus create artificial classes to which nothing in our experience corresponds, at least before their composition. An example of this type is to be found in the definition of genius, discussed in a later chapter.

The last type does not adhere rigidly to the Aristotelian framework nor is it satisfied with the inventory of characteristics. It keeps in mind the purpose of definition rather than its formal relations or component elements. It proceeds from the relatively known to the relatively unknown; in general, this was the method of Plato's dialectic. We find this type in the definition: Beauty is the permanent element in the phenomena of art.

The desire to achieve a definition of beauty is a legitimate objective of an inquiry into the meaning of art, but the difficulties have often been expressed, and the common view at present appears to be that beauty cannot be defined. In their important book on *The Meaning of Meaning,* Ogden and Richards stress the difficulties: "Beauty," they remark, "has been very often and very differently defined—and as often declared to be indefinable. If, however, we look for the characteristic defining relations, we find that the definitions hitherto suggested reduce conveniently to sixteen. Each of these then provides a distinct range of referents, and any such range may be studied by those whom it attracts. If in spite of the disconcerting ambiguity thus revealed (and all freely-used terms are liable to similar ambiguity) we elect to continue to employ the term Beauty as a shorthand substitute for the definition we favor, we shall do so only on the grounds of ethics and expediency and at the risk of all the confusions to which such behavior must give rise."

Collaborating with I. A. Richards and James Wood, Ogden produced in *The Foundations of Aesthetics* a more detailed discussion of the sixteen definitions of beauty which he had identified. The present volume owes a great deal to the suggestion and example of that able work, although *The Foundations of Aesthetics* is a collection of notes, with an outline, rather than a treatise fully justifying the title which it bears. The sixteen definitions do not exhaust the field, their historical authority and logical cogency is unequal, and the culminating formula, a meaning to which the novel term *synaesthesis* is applied, turns out to be a disappointing compromise derived from Oriental sources. The effort to get rid of disconcerting ambiguity through inventing a new word has not met with wide success.

In our present attempt to arrive at a satisfactory meaning of art, not all of the definitions mentioned by Ogden will be taken up. Those examined in the following pages have successfully met the pragmatic test. They all were or are true, according to William James, for they meet the instrumental test. "Any idea," he wrote, "upon which we can ride, so to speak, any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor, is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true instrumentally." The standard definitions of art and beauty have in the time of their vogue been effective, their merits were so vividly realized that in comparison their defects were felt to be of no account.

There is a definite and ascertainable relation in every case between the definition preferred and works of art significant for each period. Furthermore, opposed views have prevailed at the same time, a necessary situation if history is to be a continuing process and not a discontinuous succession. Unless some of the previous views persisted while others were emerging, history would be a strange series of disconnected episodes.

Radical empiricism, however, tends to be a philosophy of the instantaneous, instead of emphasizing the importance of the temporal context, and in large degree it is obliged to sacrifice temporal contiguity. It abandons actual continuity, and exaggerates the value of immediate belief. We cannot, therefore, be content to say that all these definitions are equally true on the plea that they have all been effective, and consider our inquiry ended. If we are realists enough to admit the past and recognize surviving works of past art as able witnesses to the thoughts of men now dead, or if we confidently expect that all art will not be buried with us, we shall find it difficult to focus our critical attention solely upon the immediate present. An exclusive concern with the immediate moment is one which blocks the possibility of education.

Education itself may properly be understood as nothing more than a trained and interested ability to discover meaning. Remembered knowledge, for example that embodied in a proverb, even when it is directly applicable to life, is of far less value than a resourceful, habitual, voluntary inquiry into genuine meaning. This is an attitude of mind found in Plato but absent from the fictitious, dogmatic visionary who often wears his name. In the *Meno* it is said by Socrates: "Most of the points I have made in support of my argument are not such as I can confidently assert; but that the belief in the duty of inquiring after it—this is a point for which I am determined to do battle, as far as I am able, both in word and deed." The value which Plato attached to education is to be seen in the austere *Laws,* where he speaks of it as that "which leads you always to hate what you ought to hate, and to love what you ought to love from the beginning of life to the end." If that is education, that its value and consequent obligation, how better can we obtain it than through a search for the meaning of art?

Criticism and the Search for Meaning

After all, the motive of most people who study art is to discover what it means for them. There are, of course, exceptions, such as the artist whose interest does not rise above the craftsman's level, the expert whose ambition is satisfied with a name and a date, and the dealer who is concerned with a possible profit. But these are not the majority nor the most effective students of art.

Because we intend to find out what art means, we read books, and take or give courses on aesthetics and art history. Often enough we end imprisoned in a network of verbiage, in which we lose contact with the realities of the art of our own times, and no way is left to recover our freedom by reversing the procedure and unravelling the last knot that tied us in. To avoid such a humiliating *dénouement,* we shall in the following pages, when we examine the principal meanings of art, adopt a comparative method, rather than a systematic exposition of one doctrine only.

Many of us follow the history of art, classified by country and period, or by styles and personalities. In that study it is possible to continue indefinitely accumulating information, tracing sources and influences, seeking attributions, weighing archaeological evidence, incorporating in our accumulated data everything and anything, without at any time seriously inquiring precisely what art means. The meaning of art may be shelved as an insoluble or unattainable concept of purely speculative value and of no practical interest to a museum curator. Or an unscrutinized doctrine may be secretly accepted and concealed as unscientific, fanciful, and probably detrimental to solid scholarship. To balance metaphysical irresponsibility, familiarity with specific historic monuments is necessary, but either one alone is an abundant source of disillusion.

Common Opinions against Criticism

There are certain standard judgments which condemn criticism when its scope is narrower than that accorded it as the search for meaning. Probably the most familiar equivalent for criticism is fault-finding, and this is justified in that most works of art currently produced are inferior and defective. The critic of contemporary art always finds more occasions to disapprove than to welcome new works as masterpieces. Comparison with the selected products that survive as masterpieces naturally tells against the bulk of things turned out day by day in our own time, when the process of selection and rejection has not yet accomplished even a tentative evaluation.

A second widely accepted opinion of criticism is that it passes dogmatic judgment on works of art, in arbitrary and hostile fashion, and this opinion is based largely upon the etymology of the word. Judicial criticism usually flourishes when a recognized body of rules exists, and works of art can be summoned for trial on charges of having trespassed against those statutes. Opposition to this sort of criticism attributes its power to malice, the lust for revenge of unsuccessful poets. But it is more frequently due to the brutal necessities of pedagogy facing a demand for quick and easy education. When young people are to be taught in large groups, their knowledge must be tested to make sure that they have acquired it, and to judge works of art, they must have rules to use in judging. Interesting samples of the ordinary results are to be found in I. A. Richards' recent book on *Practical Criticism.*

Correspondence courses and standardized courses in English composition for freshmen, such as are given throughout this country, could hardly exist unless students expected to learn how to write by absorbing certain rules and applying them, nor would the English department be the largest department in most colleges unless the teachers agreed in their willingness to formulate rules and impart them to the students. If a complete understanding of art and literature, as well as the technique of producing it, is the right of every tax-payer's child, and everybody is endowed with a love of art and a natural flair or innate good taste, rules are the only possible means of satisfying the insistent demand.

Sometimes those who oppose criticism, conceived as persistent hostility to current work or judicial condemnation, urge that criticism's chief function is to praise. Such an attitude is within the bounds of possibility for the student of philosophy or art history, but it is manifestly out of the question for the man who must write at stated intervals and consider a great number of art works as soon as they appear. The program of praise is so impracticable that newspaper publishers whose commercial success depends on the advertising carried, find it poor business to praise all the goods and services advertised, for the reason that readers in general do not care for publications devoted solely to praise.

Are Principles Necessary in Criticism?

Confused by general hostility to criticism, and the conflicting claims of its numerous types, some writers urge us to criticize art and to study its history without regard to principles or theories. But it seems impossible, in the first place, not to absorb inadvertently some of the established theories at the same time we consider established masterpieces of art. It is easy, in the second, to analyze the writing of empirical and impressionist critics and see that they have assumed some of the historic views without expressly stating them. Effective, thinking critics do not ignore theories. The reciprocal action, the unceasingly disturbed balance between theory and experience, afford the impetus by which our human intellectual progress is achieved.

As long as we are human and obliged not only to think but to express our thoughts and utter judgments, we can hardly get along without theories or principles. They are channels that make thinking easier, they provide a technique for dealing with experience, and they establish points of reference, abstract statements of what underlies the class of phenomena with which the critic is concerned.

Where an array or separate grouping is distinguished sufficiently to constitute a class, a principle of choice or selection must be present. When events are seen as a series, a principle of continuity must be active and efficient. Either as objects to be gathered together in museums or as a sequence of chronological products, art objects cannot be distinguished from other things without principles. Familiarity with any class of objects necessarily creates intellectual generalizations, and the situation is particularly clear when we deal with art.

Basic Importance of Art Criticism

Yet criticism of the fine arts, meaning the plastic arts in this case, has usually been subordinated to that of poetry. Because the medium of poetry is words, and its content of ideas is therefore conspicuous, critical study of poetry has nearly always been conceded to possess educational value. It would be strange, however, if the plastic arts did not deserve thoughtful attention comparable to that enjoyed by poetry, when we consider how significant for human beings is the element felt to be common in them all. Of their bond of union, Santayana said:

"The plastic arts, with poetry and music, are the most conspicuous monuments of this human interest, because they appeal only to contemplation, and yet have attracted to their service, in all civilized ages, an amount of effort, genius, and honor, little inferior to that given to industry, war, or religion."

"The sense of beauty," Langfeld more aggressively asserts, "is as vital to the complete existence of the individual and of the race as is the sense of justice; it cannot be supposed that there is any individual totally lacking in the former any more than in the latter, nor that a nascent appreciation of what is beautiful cannot be developed into a strong, useful, and satisfying aesthetic reaction to the world of colors, shapes, and sounds."

While we are cultivating a keener appreciation, something that used to be called good taste, we can and ought to do more than that. If we are sensitive, we are able, and if we are intelligent, we are bound to understand what is the meaning of this world of colors, shapes, and sounds. The artificial world of art, a human creation, is, after all, the principal means whereby we gain appreciation of aesthetic quality in the natural world.

Through the study of art, beauty, differentiated from pleasure in general, is perceived. To the care-worn peasant gathering up his tools at the end of the day's labor, the sunset means only that it is too dark to work in the fields any longer; he will enjoy a few hours of rest before resuming his endless efforts to wring a scanty living from reluctant and often hostile nature. If the sunset is especially red, the peasant's attention may be drawn to it, just as his dog's eyes would be drawn to a burning bonfire at night. But in neither case is there any clear, conscious perception of beauty.

Nature in one sense is the continuum of what we perceive through our eyes, ears, and fingers, but practically it is the world known to us through science. Its own content is not communicated or recorded for us by nature itself. We depend on the observation and report of those whose insight and ability are the best available to us. In the same way, our perception of beauty in nature derives from the reported perceptions of those who have seen beauty in nature and have given us a record of their insight. Before we discover beauty for contemplation or speculation in the sunset, we must be told about it by painting, poetry, and possibly music. As Bosanquet, among others, has said: "Nature for aesthetic theory means that province of beauty in which every man is his own artist."

When artists and critics say, as they so often do, that they study nature or judge by it, the most they can mean is that they refresh and modify perception derived from other minds through a voluntary and independent effort of their own.

In science it would be a mere trust in magic to expect a conquest of new knowledge without the aid of mathematics, controlled experiment, and all the other data and methods devised by men who preceded us. It would also be an extraordinary event, a genuine miracle, if a child abandoned on a desert isle should mature by himself and write a duplicate of Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* in English verse. To write such a poem under those conditions is beyond the power of any isolated human being; it requires more than the primitive and spontaneous activity of the solitary individual. We ought not, therefore, to fancy that an abandoned child on a desert isle should be able, by going directly to nature, to produce a romantic study of sky and atmosphere like one of Turner's water-colors, or to appreciate one if he found it buried in a cave. It is nevertheless popularly supposed that such an irrational belief is required on our part to preserve the honesty and sincerity of the artist and critic.

An effort to preserve the insight and achievement of those who have gone before is also partly responsible for the preservation of rules and formulas. To spare others the pain of discovering and assimilating all over again what has already been discovered and assimilated at least once, naturally leads to that resort. This is the intellectual and positive justification of precise, intelligible patterns of thought, opposed to mere pedagogic and negative reliance on rules. It is because we desire to preserve intellectual generalizations, that formulas, dogmas, and laws also become works of art. They fulfill the function which Santayana ascribes to all art, for: "Art supplies constantly to contemplation what nature seldom affords in concrete experience—the union of life and peace."

Critical Conclusions in Art Are not Final

It is, however, a commonplace that none of the formulas, dogmas, or laws so far discovered have ever been universally acknowledged. Many thinkers are profoundly discouraged by a lack of the unanimity they desire. As a result they are apt to feel that the subject-matter is incapable of definition, no generalization regarding beauty can ever be true. Lord Balfour once declared that the lack of acknowledged rules "seems to make our highest ideals the sport of individual caprice, to reduce the essence of beauty to individual feeling, and in so doing to make it no more than the transitory consequence of chance susceptibilities, or the incalculable byproduct of social evolution."

It is profoundly repulsive to us that anything so precious as an insight into the nature of beauty, and an experience of it through works of art or the landscape, should not persist, should not be a constant and unchanging possibility of communication. We are loath to believe that beauty is of the moment only, and that it dies with the passing of that moment's enthusiasm. The fact that beauty as a word, or art as a word, mean anything whatever testifies to our anxiety to establish them as realities superior to the cycle of individual events. When we pursue the meaning of art, we are trying to perpetuate beauty.

The obstacles presented by our preparation for the business of life and by the ensuing routine of our occupations interfere seriously with our pursuit of meaning. Poverty is the most frequent external obstacle; a conviction that attending schools and gaining a degree educates without fail, is the most vicious inner hindrance.

Particular occupations, where one might anticipate special aptitude for the realization of critical thought applied to art, offer further impediments. Young teachers of the modern languages are often obliged to spend so many years rehearsing the elements of grammar and syntax that intellectual courage is dissipated, the critical faculty atrophied before it has an opportunity to exercise its function. The teaching profession in general is weakened by the timidity of docile students who are afraid to attempt any other career; because they have been taught, they teach. The public supports this tendency when it esteems knowledge and ideas so cheaply that it hires the least courageous and intellectual among its members to prepare its younger self for life.

The rôle of the historian is probably in the long run a more significant one in western culture than even that of the scientist. But in practice the writer of history devotes himself largely to the sequence and value of political and economic institutions. Art is for him too often merely an ornamental fringe rather than the very stuff of history.

The analogy offered by art objects is also crucial in most systems of philosophy, but professional students of philosophy frequently neglect the relation between that subject and works of art. Aesthetics is for them a minor division of the entire field, and they distort it to conform with views on metaphysics, ethics, and logic. There are, strange to say, some contemporary philosophers who have already pronounced in favor of a position which theoretically abolishes the realm of metaphysics and thereby rejects aesthetics also, who still discourse on aesthetics. If the theory of beauty is an unreal series of speculations founded upon an unwarranted distinction among the objects of thought and experience, such discussion is a futile concern with fiction.

The journalist is in an unenviable difficulty when he undertakes to exercise his critical faculties upon the data of art. His activity is not controlled by the frequency with which artists produce, nor by the rate of his own progress, but by the calendar and the clock. Instead of devoting himself to ascertaining what current art means, moral expediency guides his effort to forecasting failures, to promising successes, and to bringing about results which he has expected.

Artists are among the most oracular of theorists, although they are often quite untrained in intellectual speculation, unskilled in verbal expression. If artists are the sole judges of painting, then printers and actors should be among the best judges of literature, for they are efficient and successful in dealing with words.

Our longing to free beauty from mortality is thus a powerful force in the creation of theories, but our occupations persistently baffle that desire. In addition, there exist a number of dogmas which assert the impossibility or undesirability of criticism on intellectual grounds. Empirical objections are perhaps the most familiar.

Empirical Objections to Criticism

We often hear it said that there are no critics whose superior knowledge entitles them to impose expert judgments upon the world at large. A parallel question is found in the field of morals: Does moral authority rest exclusively with any one person or group of persons? Similar questions arise in political science: In whom does sovereignty reside? How can any state enjoy absolute sovereignty if more than one sovereign state exists?

The difficulty is sometimes attenuated by admitting that authoritative critics exercise their functions as delegates of the group actually responsible in a given society for standards of taste. In France, under the monarchy, a central organization, ably led, controlled public commissions and through social prestige regulated public taste. In that case, the responsibility for good taste in America may be assigned to the leading bankers and industrialists of New York, on whose behalf recognized critics may pronounce judgments. Historically, the concepts of good taste and judicial criticism have usually gone together; empirical objections to criticism deny the rights of both.

Where critics have enjoyed wide respect and their judgments have been very influential, we observe that they do not agree among themselves. Dr. Johnson was such a critic, but we should hardly accept his decision on Milton's minor poems, of which he spoke as "trifles," declaring that "if they differ from others, they differ for the worse."

The empirical objections to criticism would cite such expressions as evidence that there are no critics who deserve to be heard, for their errors and vagaries are so manifest. The advice given by such objectors is that we should ignore critics and criticism, going directly to the work of art. Because we despair of present futilities, we should attempt ultimate impossibilities.

The same attitude towards morals is apt to point out that federal, state, and municipal law fail to secure justice for every citizen. The courts constantly disagree among themselves, the lower courts are often reversed, and the superior courts reverse their previous decisions. There are too many statutes for those subject to them to know what they must do in order to be law-abiding citizens. Legislation is inconsistent, some regulations are themselves unjust or create new varieties of injustice. It is in the interest of lawyers to encourage litigation, and legislative enactments are intended by them to be violated, in order to develop business.

Rousseau's doctrine of man's inherent goodness is a natural consequence of the empirical objections to statutory law. Objections to the criticism of art, of similar nature, urge a spontaneous, passive response to the pleasures associated with works of art, developing sensitiveness in sensation alone, since that is all that we are required to obey by our own natures.

Common sense also objects to the criticism of art on the score that it is obscure, it cannot be understood. But here again, it is hard to award the palm for stupidity to art critics in competition with critics of morals and science. After all, the only absolute obscurity is nonsense, that which nobody can grasp. Criticism, like any other human communication, implies at least two, one to speak or write and one to read or listen, and thus for criticism to be possible they must have a good deal in common to start with. Art criticism may be relatively obscure, but no more so than poetry, for example, and crystal clarity in expression would reduce discourse to the poverty, the inhuman precision of geometrical diagrams.

Criticism is not infrequently condemned because it lags behind practice and serves only to discourage the living.

Reactionary critics, it is true, will always be found ready to extol the work of reactionary artists. But the lavish praise of immature work, an extravagant approval of mediocre productions, must be a reason why the ambition of so many young people to become artists is indulged, why the energy of so many promising clerks is diverted to painting.

The crowning charge against art criticism offered by empirical opponents is that it has never yet achieved any solid results. Lord Balfour observed that after two thousand years of thinking about the matter, no accepted body of aesthetic doctrine had been evolved. This argument implies that unanimity is an essential condition of success in criticism. It also tries to reconcile that view with a belief in organic change through the centuries. Truth is a matter of physical extension, but things physically extended change. An apparently empirical objection to criticism is, therefore, rather an illustration of the metaphysical difficulty of harmonizing the one and the many.

Ethical Objections to Criticism

We may classify as ethical another group of arguments against criticism of art. Criticism makes men unhappy and sometimes it kills them; Keats and Ingres are both used as witnesses. Again, it makes collectors as well as experts miserable. They are men, to quote Lord Balfour, "whom no copy can deceive nor any original delight." Able and intelligent men have been criticizing motion and talking pictures since their extensive development, but they exercise almost no influence on the manufacturers of this brand of popular amusement; it is wrong to spend one's energies where nothing can be accomplished; therefore critics of motion pictures are foolishly employed. In the theatre, also, critics do not achieve results in proportion to their exertions. A representative survey to find out why people go to theatres produced the following reasons: recommended by a friend, 52%; producer's reputation, 8%; favorable newspaper reviews, 12%; newspaper advertising, 8%; radio exploitation, 4%; recommended by ticket broker, 16%. Actors almost never acknowledge that critics have assisted in the success of a play; but leading men have made curtain speeches at the closing performance of unsuccessful plays blaming the critics, and managers have barred newspaper writers from their theatres in fear that what they wrote would bring about financial loss.

An important charge, from the student's point of view, is the assertion that criticism of art is wrong because it raises false hopes. By taking lecture courses or by reading books, it is hoped that practical knowledge of the subject will be gained. Plays, poems, and stories are to be written and sold, a position as a critic is the least thing expected. Since many of these dreams are disappointed, criticism is something on which time should not be spent.

But if criticism makes men unhappy, so does justice which sends men to prison. A difference of 12% in the total revenues of a theatrical producer is in most cases the difference between profit and loss, if that is all the influence enjoyed by the newspaper critic. Criticism and the study of art raise false hopes only in those who believe in magic. The right formula will summon the demon from the bottle and compel him to do the speaker's will, but there are no thaumaturgic spells in the study of art, the student must do his own work.

There are other objections of even more practical character. Today more bad art exists than good, and this situation has always been true. Bad art is, to make matters worse, enjoyed more than good art, both more keenly by individuals and more extensively by greater numbers. Criticism is unable to stay the flood of mediocrity; it is a failure, and this basic defect may be considered a moral fault.

Good art, however, in the sense of worthy masterpieces, cannot exist except through selection of a relatively few things entailing rejection or subordination of the rest. The economy of human attention demands that only a limited number of things should elicit the highest degree of approval. If there are to be any masterpieces at all, not every work of art can be a masterpiece; but this does not mean that any work of art is totally lacking in beauty. Unless we recognize degrees, ranks, and hierarchies of value, we soon are left with no values; but just as individual perceptions carry no inherent guarantee of intrinsic rank, no such perception is completely in error.

There is an ethical tinge to some of the empirical charges also. If criticism is condemned on the ground that critics are ineffective, we assume that they ought to be more effective than they are. As a matter of fact, criticism of sufficiently high quality to guide us in apportioning our time and effort, to satisfy our aesthetic needs, is rarely absent from our grasp if we will reach out for it. The practical, daily plane is that on which empirical objections may be met adequately, and critics do not fail in their tasks when we wish to hear music and desire the benefit of professional opinion; they do give us practical guidance and fortify our choice with reasons, when and where we need them.

Common sense is also endowed with moral virtue. We feel that our common sense ought not to be violated. Apart from philosophical definitions of common sense, which are not usually considered when this plea is made, we do well to ascertain of what common sense consists. Modern psychology indicates that it is a strange texture of superstition, pathetic fears, and baseless hopes. It is hardly the basis of sound judgment, nor a common property on which we can unfailingly rely. Common sense still tells us that the earth is flat and the sun rises again every morning over the eastern edge of our flat earth. When we consider what sense really is common, we should not be surprised to find that a wide divergence in intelligence between the average and the upper extremes corresponds to an equivalent variation in the quality of positive content of ideas. When, however, the words *common sense* are used as identical with the clause, *it is self-evident to any rational man that,* it is just another clumsy way of begging the question. An appeal to common sense in most cases should incline the wary to favor that against which the appeal is made.

Dogmatic Objections to Criticism

In some respects the dogmatic objections to criticism are more serious than the empirical and the ethical. First, it is alleged that the range of artistic effects is infinite and irreducible to law. Next, we are further warned that there is no rational appeal from individual taste, and therefore no standard of judgment. Again, we are assured that art depends on genius, which is beyond the law. Finally, there is the view of popular mysticism that beauty is beyond thought, it is indefinable and ineffable.

Before analyzing the dogmatic objections for what they are worth, it is advisable to examine a contention, fatal to this enterprise if true, which is both empirical and dogmatic. It is the doctrine that aesthetics and criticism of art as the search for its meaning no longer exist. Their purpose is served by inductive physiological psychology, with its objective measurements. Lipps, Fechner, Müller-Freienfels, and others have asserted that exact knowledge of beauty and the nature of art are to be gained by beginning at the bottom and working up, rather than starting down from flights of metaphysical speculation. Laboratory experiment and test will tell us all we can know about aesthetic experience. Judicial criticism at the same time is replaced by a practical policy which involves no philosophical analysis. The thing to do with bad art is to ignore it; if bad artists were not fed, they would not produce bad art, for when they are dead, their capacity to produce any kind of art has ceased.

But we have already been waiting half a century for the promised revelation from the laboratory, which was to reduce aesthetics of fine art to a class of pleasurable reactions and inform us just what they are. Studies of color preference and similar phenomena as intrinsic, invariable reactions are not only futile in practice but trivial in positive content. With regard to the fine arts, distinguished from pleasures and preferences in general, it is precisely extreme cases, instances of an uncommon, rare quality which are its subject-matter.

Physiological psychology tends to assume as its cornerstone that the physiological and psychological traits of the human being alone are fixed and changeless in an otherwise unstable universe. The form and function of the human eye have not changed in historic time, nor has the shape of leaves silhouetted against the sky. Yet within the segment of historic time paralleled by the art of painting, men have seen foliage, leaves with the same shapes, as radically different things. A half-hour spent in any large gallery where landscapes and landscape backgrounds are represented in pictures produced in the last four hundred years will show that although the eyes are still the same and the leaves are unchanged, what men have seen, or rather, recorded as satisfactions of their desire to see, in foliage, is clearly not identical or constant. This is not a matter of scientific accuracy in representation; it is a definite record, such as no laboratory can supply, of psychological states and reactions occasioned by the interaction of eyes and leaves.

Stated in another way, it is not the fact that physiological reactions are possible and actual while thought is active that is important for art, and for criticism. The problem for us, for the kind of beings that we actually are, is one having to do with the positive content of what is said in works of art, the results formulated as records of effective choice on the part of those who have had those admitted possibilities. Hegel went too far, perhaps, in asserting: "The outward element of form, which renders the content accessible to intuition and imagination, exists simply for the purposes of our mind and spirit." Carritt comes nearer to what we observe, when he said: "For in any case language too makes use of physical organs and must stand or fall with other forms of art before a physiological explanation. But the most plausible explanation of a parrot's inability to converse is that he has nothing to say, and a nightingale might at least be expected to enjoy Beethoven if it had the mind."

The dogmatic objections to the criticism of art, one immediately observes, must be met separately, for they are not consistent with one another, and they assume points of view which have little in common. Criticism can, however, urge convincing claims to its own right and function, within its proper sphere.

The most far-reaching reply to attacks on criticism is this: The desire to know, to rationalize, to justify with the aid of logic, and to secure reliable reports of the content of experience, is a natural, innocent, and irrepressible tendency of the complete human being. To search for meaning is not only a higher duty of the mind, but a persisting activity which cannot be suppressed. As Parker has declared: "Long acquaintance with any class of objects leads naturally to the formation of some definitions or general ideas of them, and the repeated performance of the same type of act impels to the search for a principle that can be communicated to other people in justification of what one is doing and in defense of the value which one attaches to it." This is the eventual bulwark against all enemies of speculative thought and abstract intellectual endeavors.

Still another reply consists in pointing out an assumption variously implied by the dogmatic objections to criticism. The nature of definition and the scope of explanation are misunderstood. Whatever the effective influence of thought upon aesthetic activities and social structures, it is certain that thought and its expression in logical symbols, in words and sentences, is not a direct substitute for the aesthetic process of the production and experience of art, at any stage of the cycle. If it were, the appearance of our museums would be quite altered from what it now is. If intellectual symbols could be indifferently substituted for the things to which they somehow correspond, it would make no difference to us whether the *Assumption of the Madonna,* by El Greco, stood at the head of the stairs in the Chicago Art Institute.

A statement of the dimensions of the original, identification of the subject, an accurate indication of the composition and color scheme, a scientific tabulation of the values, a brief suggestion of the social, political, and economic milieu in which the picture was produced, a note on the philosophical assumptions, an enthusiastic critical evaluation with a definite literary value, and perhaps a poem in its praise would do. In a neat frame in the same place, the printed symbols would be a satisfactory equivalent for the painted canvas. An extended label would serve just as well.

But knowledge cannot be a substitute in efficient relations for even the things to which it relates. Knowledge can make things less strange and alien, less eccentric in their behavior; it can reduce the scope of chance, hazard, and sheer luck in our efforts to obtain freedom from the threat of extinction that the environment constantly utters. However familiar, safe, and efficient things may become through knowledge, those things do not become metamorphosed into knowledge. The symbolic shorthand in which what we know is retained and communicated is not identical with the things symbolized. The mistake of many dogmatic objections to the attainment of knowledge through criticism, is to suppose that they are identical.

Fundamentally, the justification of criticism is an aspect of the problem of knowledge. But because beauty is sometimes defined as that which is essentially useless, it is frequently deemed unnecessary to arrive at a solution of the questions offered by aesthetic judgments.

Replies to the Dogmatic Objections

The specific dogmatic counts against criticism, however, deserve attention on their own account. One of the charges already mentioned is that the range of artistic effects is infinite and irreducible to law. It is readily conceded that the total enumeration of the possible effects is beyond the capacity of an individual, and that is what the word infinite customarily means when used in such a way. But there would be no laws at all and no valid generalizations possible if we had to await complete tabulation of the instances.

There are several conclusions with regard to this difficulty which must be accepted in order to live. One of them is that a well selected and analyzed instance or group of instances is thoroughly representative of the class to which it belongs, and what is true of that instance is very probable, humanly certain, of the class. Another is that a sample collection of somewhat different instances belonging to a class incapable of exact enumeration will yield a reliable estimate of the most probable distribution of differences throughout the whole class. These are laws, ultimately justified by the principle of analogy, which we cannot do without.

To be sure, no formula or generalization is proof against being revised or superseded in time, but the devices just mentioned for coping with numerical infinity are true in their results for the time that they are applied, whenever they are used. If we have to wait for eternity to elapse, it will then be too late for anything; but our time is our own and we are sufficiently well equipped to deal with it.

Experience, furthermore, testifies to our ability to achieve generalizations that for the time being include and control more than they omit and lose. There may be moral pressure against discarding the worse for the better; but there is an ethical obligation to search out and exercise the fullest measure of knowledge that is available to us in our own day.

Another serious objection is the claim that there is no rational appeal from individual taste and hence no standard of judgment. If this simply means that art cannot be produced mechanically, manufactured by recipe and formula, and cannot be experienced without the co-operating will and intelligence, no fault can be found. More often the claim intends to emphasize the reality of individual perception to the point of denying communicability to such experience.

If a man says, "I think this picture is beautiful," it cannot be denied under normal conditions that he does in fact think and that he thinks something is beautiful. This holds, although we may find it vulgarly sentimental or otherwise inferior. But when he affirms, "This picture is beautiful," he utters a judgment in the form of a sentence demanding universal acceptance. If consent to his judgment is denied by others who look at the picture, he cannot justify his sentence by the plea that what he really means is that he is thinking, and he is thinking, for himself alone, that the picture is beautiful. When he demands universal acceptance for his view he should be able to contribute to that end by persuasion, exposition, and demonstration. The intrinsic but incommunicable refuge of his experience shelters only his own mind.

He is apt to find, however, that some though not all men report, as far as inexact and vague language will permit them to speak, that they have had an experience similar in various points to his. While he cannot then devise a set of logical symbols which provides an effective substitute for that experience, and he can never be sure that his experience is of exactly the same pattern and density as theirs, his knowledge and theirs is nevertheless similar, enough so for them to feel that they are thinking, talking, and acting about the same thing. It is common to them all in important respects as well as a possibility of individual experience.

There is no law compelling a man to change his opinions, but it is a matter of observation that he does. The similarity of mental events in other minds is fully as real as anything that meets the eyes, ears, or fingers, yet we watch changes in ourselves as well as in others. Thus there is no tribunal exerting force to compel men to change their judgments in art, but that they will change is both possible and certain. Equally sure is the possibility and actuality of communication about things common to us at any given moment, irrespective of continual change. We are comforted in our convictions by observing that they are beliefs about things which we all share and that usually we are not alone. Differences are not irrevocable decrees of separation because we ourselves change and we can change others.

The claim that there is no appeal from individual taste and hence there are no standards of judgment in art, seems also to assume that abstract concepts and specific experiences are mutually exclusive. The emotional force of one may in a given case appear greater than the other, but it is a fatal step to deny completely the existence of either. Any Greek statue demonstrates that abstract ideas and specific occasions of experience do co-exist. A representative Greek sculpture embodies the world-view, the profoundest generalizations of the ancient mind; more obviously it presents an example of mathematically proportioned ratios in the human figure, a canon of ideal measurements. But the Greeks could see and touch it and so can we.

If the claim that there is no appeal from individual taste is intended as a phase of general relativity, it is sufficient to observe that relativity is in itself no fundamental disqualification to the contingent and tentative sort of truth which is accessible to human beings organized as we are. That which is relative need not lack existence. The relative is relative to and for something else; at any one moment of time the relations of two or more things to a third, the base of reference, must be calculable with respect to that base.

However intense the persuasion of the individual as to the uniqueness of his own convictions, it is a matter of historical record and a possibility of statistical demonstration that standards of taste can and do exist. The judgments and preferences of the individual do not occur in complete isolation, many individuals exercise similar preferences and arrive at parallel conclusions simultaneously.

Language and fashion in dress offer convincing evidence that aesthetic preferences change continuously but that they are shared by a large number at the same time. Slang terms and popular similes or metaphors are at the level where language changes most frequently; any historical anthology of prose or verse in the same tongue will demonstrate that the process takes place at a slower pace on the higher levels. Fashionable shops in metropolitan centers, in order to exist, must accurately anticipate and satisfy the aesthetic wants of those most free to exercise their individual judgments in matters of dress. In any one season these shops agree broadly in their expert and effective judgments, and yet harmonious conclusions change from one season to the next. Even color preferences shift from one season to the next, and it is both easier and more accurate to inspect the fashionable shops to discover what are the actual and dominating choices in colors, than to test unrepresentative subjects under the artificial conditions of the laboratory in a futile effort to ascertain unchanging color preferences.

Where the physical properties and qualities of an object remain fairly constant, price is an indication of the preferences prevailing at different times. The price of a painting produced in some past time indicates, for each moment when it was paid, the intensity of competitive desire to possess this kind of non-consumable goods. A really thorough history of the prices of art objects over a long period of time would be most valuable material for aesthetics and art history. Forty years ago, Mr. Joseph E. Widener paid $6,000 for two paintings; one a Degas, and the other Manet's *Dead Toreador*. The latter picture by itself is worth $100,000 today, and the change in price tells us a good deal about the competitive desirability of Manet then and now. About the same time a Vermeer was sold in Paris for $15,000; in 1912 it was purchased here for about ten times that amount; its value today is estimated at about $250,000, to judge by other recent sales of the master's work. That such things have a price and that prices are paid indicates that there is an appeal from individual taste. While prices change, there is at each moment a set of preferences actually existing with a corresponding rank of values. This, of course, does not show that price is an index of intrinsic merit, it shows only that at least one kind of effective standard prevails which is sufficient to disprove the claim that there are no standards of taste.

The existence of standards and dominating preferences is, furthermore, essential for art history, if it is to be genuine history. Distinction of personalities and styles is possible only on the assumption that they were both immanent and actual.

Social life itself requires the existence of agreements which actually prevail. But unities and uniformities are different things. If there is to be socialized life, intelligent and intelligible unities and modes must be realized actively; but if all the instances were uniform there could be no change.

The dogmatic objection to criticism which charges that beauty is beyond thought, indefinable, ineffable, and incommunicable is characteristic of popular mysticism. Mysticism itself will be the subject of a later chapter. As a logical attack on criticism, it is nullified by the fact, already noticed, that symbols are not substitutes in every relation for the things symbolized. Yet this is the ground of the popular mystics' denial of the possibility of thought about art.

Emotion, desire, and appreciation of value are not, like false teeth, detachable parts of the human reality. They are inherent functions of the same being of which discursive thought is another. To protect the substantial integrity of beauty, truth, and the good, it is often pleaded that understanding can understand only itself. An understanding of beauty cannot, it is true, be used in place of an experience of beauty, in which other factors co-operate beside understanding. But this does not mean that the values, beauty, truth, and goodness, cannot be interpreted in terms of one another, or that each cannot be distinguished in its context.

As Santayana has so well said: "The man who would emancipate art from discipline and reason is trying to elude rationality, not merely in art, but in all existence. He is vexed at conditions of excellence that make him conscious of his own incompetence and failure. Rather than consider his function, he proclaims his self-sufficiency. A way foolishness has of avenging itself is to excommunicate the world."

Because no objection to criticism can abolish its right to exist, the criticism of art is a legitimate and may be a profitable occupation of the human mind. As it is possible for art to have meaning, we may hopefully seek the one that is most probable. If art can have significance, which of the accepted formulas is most satisfactory, most apt to prove true? We should begin this part of our inquiry by examining the common standard employed in judging art. Is ethical value the meaning of art?

CHAPTER III

IS GOODNESS OR BADNESS THE MEANING OF ART?

That the chief value of art is ethical, that art is to be judged mainly on the basis of its moral significance, that the most important thing to decide about art is whether it is good or bad, is the common understanding of art. The usual abstract theory brought into play in the consideration of art is, of course, that of imitation. What does this picture represent, and how well? The question is usually asked and answered as a scientific matter to be satisfied by tests of accuracy. The scale of values employed at the same time is, however, ethical. Is it right to represent such things as are shown in this picture? Will the effect on observers be good or bad? Accuracy and morality are here usually combined, though not necessarily, and since the problems are presented together, it seems advisable to survey them at the start. It thus appears that the aesthetic object is immediately resolved into questions of true knowledge and of practical ethics. It will be more convenient to examine first what goodness has to do with art and then truth.

We should realize, to begin with, that most ethical judgments of art are expressed adversely. This picture is morally objectionable, therefore it will corrupt young people who see it in the museum, it should not be exhibited, the police should destroy the picture and punish its author. The ethical position also enters when we say that it is wrong to represent our dear grandfather with green shadows in his straw-colored hair, or to depict him so that his own grandchildren cannot recognize him.

As a matter of fact, sexual relations attract so much interest that the vulgar interpretation of immorality is irregular sexual conduct. This exaggerated emphasis distorts judgment and makes difficult an appreciation of the intrinsic problem. Grandfather's portrait is much more favorable to sound discussion, for deliberately to tell what is untrue, to express persuasively what is not so, to mislead or deceive another, is exclusively a human sin. It is no accident that Satan himself is designated as the father of all lies, and if art must be tested by moral criteria, especially for antimoral results, we shall do better to follow ancient criticism and see whether the picture lies, whether it encourages liars, rather than simply inquire whether or not the picture is indecent.

Within the field of art, the question might be narrowed a good deal if we were sure that all those things which we now call art were aesthetic by intention. But it is doubtful if many of the objects in our museums, such as those associated with Egyptian burial rites, were made for contemplation. These things as well as others obviously intended to be aesthetic, the decorative flower-paintings of Redon, for example, are, however, products of human activity. They were infected with ethical function in their material origins, and continue to enter into moral relations as long as they are felt to be human products, rather than situations over which we can have no real control, like the sunset or a snowstorm.

On the other hand, by an effort of will or through practiced recollection, even in the presence of danger, a storm can be contemplated as an aesthetic object, the hero can view himself as an actor in a tragedy. In memory or in vivid anticipation, the aesthetic element predominates even in the contemplation of experience. Thus, as ultimate values both the good and the beautiful are at all times aspects and functions of reality; they interpenetrate as it were; it is inconceivable that any experienced object should be conditioned exclusively by either, and this situation presents one of the most disturbing and provocative of the persistent enigmas.

Is the Beauty in Art Inferior?

But when we accept the good, the true, and the beautiful as the three ultimate values, following deep prejudices which we receive from Greek antiquity, the question of their relative rank arises to trouble the peace which we might expect to gain from such a belief. It is characteristic of western thought to declare that the good is the supreme value, and the other two are somehow subordinate to it. Thus the question develops: Is the beauty of art inferior to the beauty of what is true or what is good? And the logical but unwelcome corollary to the broad position that the good is the supreme value, would be the surprising conclusion that the beauty of what is good and what is true is superior to the beauty of what is simply beautiful.

Yet, if the good and the beautiful are eventually identical, should we not consider aesthetic admiration and contemplation an act of virtue? Can the contemplation of a Cézanne be substituted for deliberate kindness to an unattractive and querulous elder relative? If the limitation of our time and means makes an exclusive choice of one or the other necessary, which is right? Eminent authorities can, if desired, be cited to appear on either side of the case. Some, however, would tell us that the question does not offer a genuine problem, only one created by the contrast of distinct values. They would point out that we may properly ask: Is it better to contemplate the excellence of a Cézanne or the heroism of saving a child's life? On the other hand, we may ask: Is it better to paint or acquire a Cézanne than to tell the truth to one's own hurt? It then appears that for aesthetic contemplation, works of art are better, as more pure, and as the source from which aesthetic values in common life are derived. But for primary ethical values, virtuous action is preferable to actions which lead to exclusively aesthetic values. Such a solution illustrates the claim that aesthetic and ethical values as concretely realized are not interchangeable.

It was very natural that in antiquity the ethical test should be the common basis of criticism and that imitation should be the favorite theoretical explanation of art. In spite of the speculation and controversy which have taken place in modern times, popular opinion still follows the Greeks in this respect. If art is imitation, then the art object has an ethical value; it is morally good or bad, depending on the value of the subject; the imitative function of art is fulfilled in accordance with the measure of success achieved in duplicating the ethical quality of the original. This basis is indicated by Aristotle in his famous discussion of the merits of various painters, in the *Poetics*.

Instead of adopting radical optimism in theory, as all sane people do in practice, we may in principle be convinced to the contrary. We can accordingly condemn art, on the grounds that it imitates nature, which is bad in itself. In Semitic antiquity, and among the Puritans, a profound hostility to the plastic arts, particularly to sculpture, may rest partly on such an attitude. According to Brunetière, art is in the last analysis immoral, for it imitates nature which is fundamentally immoral. He asserts of nature that, "there is no vice of which she does not give us an example, nor any virtue from which she does not dissuade us."

Ancient theory of art was, however, dominated by the conception of art as an illusion and duplication of nature. This was the basis of the critical, polemic, and apologetic treatment of the subject. Art as fiction, whether plastic or literary, is the center around which Greek and Roman aesthetic battles were waged. The question came up often, in connection with the value of poetry as the accepted vehicle of education. It was a commonplace in antiquity that the conduct of the divine beings discussed in their classical literature would be contemptible if not criminal in contemporary life, and furthermore the poets narrated things which for the most part were impossible and could not happen, or if possible, were mere inventions, and had not occurred. Plutarch and St. Basil wrote treatises on this educational problem. Plutarch, like schoolmasters in most cases today, decided that classical literature should be studied purely for rhetorical and grammatical exercise, disregarding the subjects portrayed or narrated, because the poets were, with regard to the truthfulness of their assertions, mere liars. There will be more to say about this central doctrine of imitation in the next chapter. But its relation to ethical considerations must be pointed out here.

Is Art to be Tested by its Intention?

If, then, the fundamental criterion to which art is subject is the ethical, should good poetry be poetry which is primarily ethical by intention? Whatever our modernistic aesthetic prejudices may be, if we deny such a claim, we find ourselves in disagreement with some of the greatest of poets and critics. Aristotle, Horace, Wordsworth and Arnold have all held that the purpose of poetry is ethical. The romantic school is inclined to reverse the claim, and assert, as did Hegel and Schopenhauer, that art is a direct agent of morality, it guarantees against immorality and purifies all that it touches. In that case, all art is necessarily moral good.

It has been observed that the chief business of morality is a negative function. It is usually a negative judgment or a perception of evil. Anything which can attract our attention and impress us with the ill effects of wrong-doing and wrong-thinking is thus to that extent an engine of morality. Insight into evil gained through imagination, rather than through the painful and irrevocable school of experience is much better. If we know vividly what evil is, we can more easily avoid it. As a summary of human experience communicated directly through imagination, without harm to ourselves, art has the value of signs and signals along the highway.

Comedy was in antiquity and afterwards defended as a vehicle of edification. The themes and episodes of this species of ancient drama were frequently unsavory and the characters depicted far from noble. But Aristotle, Theophrastus, Cicero, and the general Peripatetic tradition defended these faults. Cicero said that comedy was an imitation of common life, a mirror of experience, wherein one might see the truth without injury to oneself. This line of defense was later taken by playwrights to protect themselves against the attacks of the Puritans, and is quoted often by Ben Jonson and others. It was also adopted by the schoolmasters of the Renaissance and subsequent ages, as the moral justification for allowing young people to read and take pleasure in Latin comedies, when the whole business of education was to train men to avoid such conduct as the comedies depict and to prefer a righteous, upright course in life.

Bertrand Russell in writing on *Psychology and Politics,* claims that political opinions are not based upon reason. He continues: "Now the sentiments of an adult are compounded of a kernel of instinct surrounded by a vast husk of education. One way in which education works is through influencing imagination." In his estimate of the probable consequences when imagination is controlled by those in power, he declares: "Psychology, like every other science, will place new weapons in the hands of the authorities, notably the weapons of education and propaganda, both of which may, by a more finished psychological technique, be brought to the point where they will be practically irresistible."

Formerly, in the more popular journals, and to some extent in cheaper publications still, there flourished advertisements which offered to communicate the secret of personal power for a small price; you too could possess a magnetic personality, through hypnotic powers you too could compel all others to do your will. The motive of absolute and irresistible power has been transferred to a field more systematized, if scarcely more scientific, and in placing such great emphasis on ulterior uses of the imagination, modern educational theorizers, popular psychologists, and public utility combinations are in complete agreement with the Puritans. Indeed, publicity and propaganda organizations usually view themselves as engaged in educating the public, they customarily assert that they are concerned with the laudable task of disseminating correct information to offset prejudice and propaganda.

When the power of the imagination is so keenly appreciated, and the specific aim of achieving somebody's good through controlling it is dominant, art works are viewed with extreme seriousness. Posters and motion pictures will persuade the population at large to uphold any war because it is justly waged for the defense of sacred interests. They may also awake people to dangers of tuberculosis and persuade them to take measures to combat it. Since the rise of the sentiment of nationality in modern history, national, provincial, municipal, and even neighborhood theatres, music, and painting have been encouraged and used as vehicles of political and social doctrines or ambitions. It is almost universally conceded by politicians and advertising experts that the right pictures, words, and music will get you what you want. Good art is then art which is used to do good.

The arbitrary, self-seeking consequences, the cold-blooded calculation of the doctrine that good art is art that does good may prompt us to leap to the opposite extreme. How can art works that are primarily moral in intention be good art? As a matter of fact, most of the great writers of fiction in the nineteenth century had precisely that intention; it is much more apparent in them than in Homer or in Virgil. Dickens, Victor Hugo, Turgeniev, Tolstoy, Henrik Ibsen, H. G. Wells, and G. B. Shaw all had aims other than the creation of pure works of art. It appears, too, that they assisted greatly in accomplishing their specific unartistic objectives at the very same time they created works of art.

A more direct attack on the problem can be organized through formulating it in this way: Is didactic verse poetry? Is the *Art of Poetry* by Horace poetry? Is Pope's *Essay on Man*? Is Darwin's *Botanic Garden*? The proclaimed purpose of these compositions was moral, educational, informative. To our generation they lack the lyric spirit, the emotional fervor which we associate with true poetry, we admit only that the verse may be an easier way of memorizing sound doctrine and accurate information. To the generation which produces it, however, the aesthetic quality of moral or scientific truth may be so profoundly appealing, that such verse procures a genuine and intense aesthetic experience.

Another consideration in this connection has to do with caricature. Cartoons aim deliberately at exaggeration and distortion for the sake of expression and forcefulness. They are used to condemn wrongs, to confound the enemies of the good and true; they are perhaps the most adequate example of the moral function of art, when, as was the case with Daumier's lithographs, they have not only a moral function but also an indubitable aesthetic quality. Is the cartoon, then, the norm of all good art? Is caricature the test of artistic excellence? Classical art, in the sense of the classical period in ancient western art, and the art of the High Renaissance, testify to the contrary.

It is often said that the problem whether art should teach a moral is a question for ethics to decide, or rather for the moralist to settle. In the case of many great works of art, the moral function is so attenuated or has so completely evaporated by this time, that moral purpose hardly enters into consideration. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the various portraits of *Philip IV* by Velazquez, and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* are conventionally rated as masterpieces of art. Milton's theology no longer seems cogent or indispensable to most of his readers; Philip IV was the weak monarch of a decadent state; *Macbeth* deals with crimes and superstitions which are repulsive to a sceptical and scientific generation. In any case the Puritan sermons of Milton's days were much more efficient than his poems in teaching and impressing Calvinistic theology on his contemporaries. A vast bureaucracy and centralized system of government were much more effective in winning respectful awe for majesty in seventeenth-century Spain than the paintings of Velazquez. Regicide was not discouraged by *Macbeth*. Even, therefore, in cases where great works of art, judged by contemporary standards, were ethical, or at least moral in their original purpose, they do not survive or afford satisfaction to people totally unconcerned with that purpose, and quite indifferent to it. Furthermore, as a moral pamphlet *Paradise Lost* was probably worth just about the money that Milton received for it, when preachers, teachers, and magistrates could be had to do effective work very cheaply.

It would, nevertheless, be an artificial and excessive separation between the aesthetic and the ethical fields which claimed that moral value detracts from artistic worth. Aristotle properly considered the Platonic dialogues as a sort of poetry, but only a reckless exclusiveness could claim that the measure of philosophic truth and insight which those dialogues possess, particularly in the myths, diminished their poetic beauty. The beauty of art would be an arid thing if moral and intellectual values did not support and sometimes intensify beauty in art.

But it is surprising how often the criterion of sincerity is applied as a test of artistic merit by those who have explicitly denied that art should be measured by moral values. The charge of insincerity is one of the favorite condemnations against the artist whose work does not meet with approval. It is asserted that he paints as he does because he is copying the work of some other artist and hence is not original, or else he is imitating a popular or academic style, when he knows better. The official portrait-painter can and usually does impugn the sincerity and honesty of the independent radical on such grounds and vice-versa. This is surely carrying to an extreme point the idea that virtue depends on knowledge, and that, furthermore, knowledge of the truth is universally available, so that only wilful perversity could be the reason for not following it. The academician's practice is to the independent clear proof of sin against the light, while the radical's failure to conform is vicious license, a mere desire to be different and attract attention, as well as a deliberate trespass against known truth.

After all, the artist does not really deceive anybody in practice. The portrait of the banker cannot sign checks in the painter's favor, nor can the painter compel him to do so by means of the painting. Again, if the truth of the artist's vision is something known only to himself, but communicated to us through the medium which he uses, we have no sure means of knowing when he is untrue to his inner vision, so that basic untruthfulness on his part is beyond our detection. We have only the communicated expression by which to judge, and that is incapable of deceiving us effectively. Affectation, mannerism, eclectic and uninspired combinations, may be detected in painters, but to consider such elements as moral values usually implies either that the artist has a true inner vision, the adequate imitation of which we can really not judge, or else it implies the doctrine of imitation, with a uniform nature equally visible to us all, so that we can immediately perceive failure to imitate as a moral fault.

Art for Art's Sake

The familiar doctrine of art for art's sake may well be analyzed as a natural reaction against the didactic moralists and their contention that art should teach a lesson, if it is to be good art. Art for art's sake goes so far as to affirm that art is sufficient unto itself. Aesthetic values are not only separate or to be distinguished from moral relations, they are quite independent, they constitute an autonomous realm. The laudable purpose of this doctrine was to overthrow didacticism as the governor of art and legalism as the infallible rule in morals. It was a beloved article of faith, blindly affirmed as an arrogant assertion of freedom by some romanticists. In the face of experience, there were many to say that art has nothing to do with morality, politics, or science, that it has no other end than itself. Among these were Gautier, Alfred de Musset, Baudelaire, Heine, and even Sainte-Beuve.

The attitude was essentially a defensive one against the didactic critics, but instead of adopting a defensive attitude and pleading innocence, they turned the tables on their enemies, by placing themselves beyond the jurisdiction of their judges. Insofar as the theory has a slight foundation of plausibility, it is due to an indolent and passive pseudomysticism. It is true that, as a rule, he who is enraptured by the *Last Judgment* or by *Hamlet,* or the artist in the heat of composition, is not concentrating on the moral aspects of his own activity, of the object in its objective relations, or on the ethical consequences of what he does. Such a man has an exhilarating sense of freedom and independence. But this happy state confers no absolute sovereignty on the art through which the taste of ideal well-being is for the moment enjoyed. It is disastrous to claim that because art does confer such real though fleeting happiness, because it opens the door to a brief vision of such happiness as work-a-day experience does not afford, he who has seen that light should be blind to his relations with other men and to the acknowledged order of the tangible, visible world in which he lives. The belief that the knowledge of a superior world abolishes the inferior one of ordinary acquaintance leaves those who accept it incapable of truly seeing either world. This theory is both a cause and a result of weakness. When we substitute a part for the whole, we do not eliminate the difference between the whole and that part. To ignore or despise time and space because of an insight into the eternal makes the vision a hallucination and by contrast magnifies the familiar difficulties of the daily routine.

It is such perversions of the authority and intrinsic quality of the aesthetic experience, rather than the example of the classics, which motivates the Puritan attack on art. As Parker has phrased it, for the Puritan, art is immoral; for the philistine, it is useless; for the proletarian, a cruel waste. But the philistine and the proletarian unite in their hostility towards art and their arguments are not dissimilar.

Attacks on the Theatre

The attack on the theatre, which receives such persistent support among the Puritans, finds authoritative texts in the Fathers of the early church. The campaign against the theatre as a social institution and religious force, begun at that time, was never really interrupted until the age of Rousseau. But the degradation of the Roman theatre which provided the Fathers with a motive for condemning all art, led Tertullian to say: "The father of truth loves nothing false. Every poem is a lie." The Romans themselves, of republican days, had been shocked by the license with which Greek comedy made sport of prominent citizens, and the laws of the twelve tables had forbidden writers of comedies to mock eminent Roman citizens. To the Christians, the theatre was an odious institution because it made the forms of the gods and their legends plausible and appealing; thus St. Augustine quite seriously ascribed the ruin of the Empire to the false doctrines taught on the stage.

The illusion of life which is so persuasive on the stage, where human beings act and speak, was repugnant in the other arts to many of the late Romans of the Empire, whether they were Christians or not. An antipathy of eastern origin, against too evident a suggestion of life-like quality in sculpture or painting, inspired Constantine when he demanded that statues of himself should not possess any such illusion. "The true divine nature," he said, "uses no art. Only the false and deceiving can be made manifest in art." It is interesting to compare this expression of opinion with the numerous statues of the Emperor.

A strange element in the fear which the Puritan entertains toward art is his estimate of the power of sympathy. If we see the forms of pagan gods graciously and nobly presented in sculpture, we shall be led to sympathize with their beauty and overlook scandalous tales told of them by the poets, we may even excuse such conduct in human life. Motion pictures of unmarried mothers, according to the rules of most boards of censorship in the several states, would increase the percentage of illegitimacy, and hence they must not be shown on the screen. The attribution of irresistible power to the sympathetic imagination, and overwhelming persuasiveness to works of art is, we must note, not the view of the friends of art but of its enemies.

Some who could hardly be designated as Puritans, Paulhan for example, hold that because art is either conventional or erratic, it is in either case deceptive; it exists apart from and is opposed to reality, it unfits us for the practicalities of life, since it substitutes an illusion for ordinary experience. In contrast with Paulhan's intellectual, though hostile attitude, there is the bitter economic Puritanism of Upton Sinclair who, in his *Mammonart,* finds that all the popular writers are wicked slaves of Wall Street, and that the only good art is art which is deliberate socialistic propaganda.

Tangible Results of Invisible Causes

Another important aspect of Puritan zeal is this: it is easier to destroy tangible results than their invisible causes. In the vivid imagination of the moral reformer, the work of art is substituted for the evils which he resists. He believes that the work of art will be the cause of the evil he hates in other persons, if it is permitted to exist. He cannot eradicate the desires of which he is so keenly aware in other men, but he supposes that he can do so by destroying nude statues, without regard to the aesthetic quality or ostensible purpose of these works.

On the other hand, since such works are exhibited in museums, that fact is sometimes made the justification for permitting magazines and photographs to be sold whose purpose and appeal can hardly be questioned. That was the attitude taken by a New York judge; as long as the Metropolitan Museum could exhibit nude statues, the publications to which the plaintiffs objected should continue to be offered for sale at New York newsstands.

The newer psychologies, with their emphasis on the sex impulse, find a ready explanation for the Puritan's state of mind; if their explanation were satisfied with its appropriate function in the case of the Puritan and other abnormal groups, instead of being made a universal and all-inclusive psychology, it would possess more substance. The whole controversy in which the Puritans are involved, encounters its greatest weakness in what is simply another confusion of values. The Puritan's error consists in taking an aesthetic attitude toward morals and an ethical attitude toward art.

Art is not the victim of the Puritans only. Social reformers in general, even those who declare themselves to be its friends, do it slight service. One of the inducements usually held out by those who propose programs of social reform is that their improved social system will guarantee better art, cheaper art, better paid artists. Art will be both more widely dispersed and more richly rewarded. William Morris, Ruskin, and some of the other Pre-Raphaelites saw this as the sure goal of improvement in social organization. Communism, socialism, absolute monarchy as broad plans, and more special schemes such as the single tax, prohibition, and woman's suffrage, have all made similar promises. Continental governments for several centuries have diverted public funds to the protection of official art, and there is a movement on foot to have a secretary of art and education in the American cabinet.

However, history offers conclusive evidence for neither the reformers nor the conservatives. Holland is today probably more sober, industrious, and secure than it was during the seventeenth century, but its national art has not progressed. Indeed, if any condition of the environment should be most apt to encourage the production of fine art, it would be beauty in the landscape surroundings and architectural monuments. But modern Italian art is inferior to that produced amid the flat, uninteresting scenery of northern France, where modern art has flourished most intensely. Beautiful lands do not seem to affect directly the beauty or ugliness of the inhabitants' morals or art. A favorite hypothesis of an elder generation of historians held that there is a close relation between political institutions and success in art; it is asserted, for example, by Sismondi. The Reformation in Scotland was surely an important and active period, but it did not have any reflection in the fine arts. While the old institutions were being destroyed with violence in Spain at the beginning of the nineteenth century in preparation for a new absolutism, Goya was stirred to produce a new and explosive art, but the typical and significant movements of art in the present century had all been initiated before the great war and, so far as we are aware, no radically new innovations have presented themselves since then.

Tolstoy a Modern Puritan

Perhaps the most influential of the Puritan discussions of art in the whole nineteenth century was that of Tolstoy, whose positive aesthetic doctrine was formulated before him by the brilliant young Frenchman, Guyau.

The most useful source for a study of Tolstoy's ideas is probably the edition, by Aylmer Maude, of *What Is Art?* This volume contains the other essays by Tolstoy dealing with art, in addition to the long discussion from which the collection derives its title. The work swarms with aggressive contradictions and inconsistencies. For instance, the sage makes much of relativity and change of taste. Its lack of practical consequences compared with those of wrongdoing, he imagines, makes aesthetics in itself unimportant. He seems oblivious of the fact that ethics is open to exactly the same criticism.

On the other hand, Tolstoy condemns fine art as merely the sophisticated, fashionable pleasure of the upper classes. It is religion alone that determines what is good and evil in life, and art is usually nothing more than pleasure, for irreligious people. The common people, however, have never lacked true art, that is, religious art. In contrast to their simple, honest art, Tolstoy found by examining the verse of Huysmans and other contemporary decadents that the art of the upper classes was merely a manifestation of erotic mania, stimulated by the idleness of the wealthy. Art as mere amusement or decadent pleasure necessarily grows wearisome by repetition and requires newer, more depraved forms to revive interest.

His standards for the criticism of art are, however, definitely stated. "There is," he says, "one indubitable indication distinguishing real art from its counterfeit, namely, the infectiousness of art . . . And the degree of infectiousness of art depends on three conditions:—(1) on the greater or lesser individuality of the feeling transmitted; (2) on the greater or lesser clearness with which the feeling is transmitted; (3) on the sincerity of the artist, i. e., on the greater or lesser force with which the artist himself feels the emotion he transmits."

Art is also to be judged, according to Tolstoy, by its subject-matter in addition to the tests for quality urged above. "How in art are we to decide what is good and what is bad in subject-matter?" He answers: "The subject-matter of Christian art is such feeling as can unite men with God and with one another. . . . Art, all art, has this characteristic, that it unites people. Every art causes those to whom the artist's feeling is transmitted to unite in soul with the artist, and also with all who receive the same impression." He declares that: "The Christian art of our time can be and is of two kinds: (1) art transmitting feelings flowing from a religious perception of man's position in the world in relation to God and to his neighbor—religious art in the limited meaning of the term: and (2) art transmitting the simplest feelings of common life, but such as are always accessible to all men in the whole world—the art of a people—universal art. Only these two kinds of art can be considered good in our time." Thus art must be either religious or fraternal.

Tolstoy also gives examples of what he thinks is good and bad art, chosen from a contemporary exhibition in England. From them we see that, apart from technical or aesthetic considerations, the pictures of which he disapproves are those displaying female nudity, and those of which he approves display in sentimental manner an act of charity.

Proletarian Objections to Fine Art

The objections to art urged by the proletarian and the philistine, noted by Parker, also deserve notice. The proletarian feels that while there is want and suffering in our world, it is wrong to waste so much money on expensive and vain luxuries, among which he includes art. It may be pointed out that artists themselves, even those who produced the expensive masterpieces, were for the most part poor men, they received as a rule but a small share in the prize-money. The original cost of producing art was, socially, very small. It may also be asserted that lack of prudence and judgment on the part of the less affluent social strata is in bulk the cause of much greater extravagance than the purchase of art works by the very rich. Judged as luxuries, the money laid out on chewing-gum, cigarettes, and stupid motion pictures, far exceeds the cash expenditures for paintings and sculpture, for rare editions, or private palaces. Much of the best is, however, either freely enjoyed or so low in cost that it is quite within the reach of those who really desire it.

Contrary to the predictions of Marx, the machine age, at least in America, has not led to the enslavement of the masses and the monopoly of all good things by the exclusive owners of the machines. For one thing, ownership of the machines is almost as widely disseminated as their products, a large percentage of the population now owns some sort of industrial securities, as well as automobiles and vacuum cleaners. Another unexpected result is that as wages and per capita production have both increased, the slave of the machine lives better and has more.

In this age a surplus above the amount of consumable goods required to maintain animal existence is obtained in unsurpassed volume and widely distributed. The hours of release from labor, and the tangible benefits which the average American has, far exceed anything known before in civilization. It is, then, the problem of surplus means and available leisure which affects us most keenly, rather than the problem of preventing a famine in this country.

Another aspect of the problem which touches the objections raised by the proletarian and by Tolstoy is to be found in the question: What are the practical limits of sympathy? Must we, like Buddha, remain outside paradise, even the paradise of art, until the last living thing has been saved? Until the feeble-minded and organically-diseased can be prevented from multiplying their kind, until all criminals and others whose behavior is anti-social are emasculated or executed, it is practically impossible to eliminate suffering and distress entailed in economic disability, and even then it is not clear how we are to prevent men who individually may be intelligent and self-controlled from relapsing, when brought together in numbers, to the savage level under the stimulus of mob-emotion, from engaging in war and other costly, unprofitable enterprises.

If art and the other higher products of civilization were to wait until the number of really intelligent, competent, and wise people became less than the supply of material goods available to them, and the supply evenly distributed, there would be no art. There is always a sphere just outside our immediate vision which requires more than it has.

During recent years there have been widespread and disastrous famines in China, of which one cause has been the incessant civil war waged there. The conditions imposed by the military leaders on American relief agencies have practically prevented the customary flow of aid from this country. But it appears that in China, at any rate, where there is no alternative but fighting or eating, they prefer to fight. With further reference to Tolstoy it may be said that the simplest emotions are stirred by the crudest art, and that sort of art which is the most contagious is the kind which is leading and has led millions of people to death and starvation during the last fifteen years. If we must wait until popular art has had its say before fine art can be heard, popular art might exterminate all speakers and hearers, too.

The Philistine against Fine Art

The philistine's case is simple. For him, art is merely useless. If he cannot understand or appreciate anything, he must universalize or rationalize his own disability. The philistine group includes a large percentage of even the educated. If they cannot understand the Italian primitives, anybody who asserts that he finds something in them must in their judgment be either hypocritical or unintelligent, a knave or a fool. The philistine, too, is fond of sincerity as a criterion of art and the love of art. His position is shown at its true worth by analyzing the value of what he does prize. The reformed philistine, in his mature years and wealth, is apt to buy pictures which are so expensive that men of ordinary means cannot afford them. To buy costly pictures establishes both his superior taste and his superior ability; he knows that his pictures are very choice because they cost a great deal of money; and he knows he is a superior being because he was able to make the money to buy them. If the philistine does anything for contemporary art or artists, he buys pictures only as a speculation, proving his discrimination by the fact that what he buys increases in price. In their eagerness to interest the great philistine public and the philistine man of wealth in their institutions, our public museums make a very serious mistake. They should place on each label, in large figures, the appraised present value, in dollars, of each object exhibited.

The philistine in his articulate moments is, however, frank and ingenuous. The systematization of his attitude, the canonization of his prejudices, accompanied by a benevolent, indiscriminate emotional glow, which is to be found in current American pragmatism, fortifies him in his complacency without, perhaps, intending to do so.

Santayana, in his *Winds of Doctrine,* has a brief summary in which he states the implications of pragmatism. He writes: "Thus all creeds and theories and all formal precepts sink in the estimation of the pragmatist to a local and temporary grammar of action; a grammar that must be changed slowly by time, and may be changed quickly by genius. To know things as a whole, or as they are eternally, if there is anything eternal in them, is not only beyond our powers, but would prove worthless, and perhaps even fatal to our lives. Ideas are not mirrors, they are weapons; their function is to prepare us to meet events, as future experience may unroll them. Those ideas that disappoint us are false ideas; those to which events are true are true themselves."

In its origins, pragmatism is theoretically a reaction against mechanical idealism, illustrated by Hegel, and against dogmatic religious determinism, illustrated by Calvinism, while positively it finds in the biological theories of evolution a sufficient abstract basis. Its method is that of casuistry, supported by an optimistic mood, derived from the observation that the laws of mechanics, shrewdly applied through invention and engineering, provide material benefits to the industrious and hopeful. A good deal of James' philosophical effort was directed to the task of disproving the metaphysical systems favored in his day, and to establishing the proposition that such a thing as a true system of metaphysics is an impossibility, the subject really does not exist.

Pragmatism, with radical empiricism, is thus an ethical system, and accordingly, art is to be judged as good or bad exclusively by its consequences, if its implications are logically followed. Bad art is that which has evil consequences. Thus the idol or fetich of an African tribe to whom prayers are made for rain and sacrifices are offered, may properly be burned, if continued drought is the idol's response to the intercessions of its devotees.

Nature and the Stars, Refuge from Puritans

One effective way of escaping from the Puritan and philistine, perhaps the most popular way in modern times, is to submit to the philistine and Puritan insofar as works of art are concerned, and transfer all love of beauty to nature, as a realm from which it cannot be eradicated by its enemies. In late classical times this flight to nature for beauty's sake was embodied in the Isle of Calypso. Mt. Athos was also a place of refuge for the contemplation of a beauty which was no longer to be seen in the world from which its founders fled. St. Bernard, so charmingly represented by Filippino Lippi, praised the delights of nature in words which were afterwards incorporated by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*. The same theme recurs in descriptions of the monastic life. The gods had been dissolved into a feeling for the beauty of landscape. Something of the mood was to be found in the descriptions of landscape introducing the *Phaedrus* and other dialogues of Plato. The beauties of landscape, the delights and freedom which it offered, became a fixed subject of mediaeval verse, from the *carmina burana* to lays of courtly love. In the romantic era, and persisting down to very recent times, this is one of the most conspicuous elements in verse.

Another way in which the pagan gods and the aesthetic ideals with which they were associated were rescued from Puritanism was to place them, through astrology and astronomy, no longer on the earth, but in the stars. The *Timaeus* was an effective document in this movement, continuing to be read through the Middle Ages in the Latin version of Chalcidius. To this end both the Pythagorean mystical theory of numbers and Neoplatonic astrology contributed. Origen, St. Augustine, Giordano Bruno, Campanella, and in our own time, Fechner, have all held that the stars are spiritual beings, whose "sensibility is full of pleasure" according to Campanella.

Evil a Prior Question

Viewed from another approach, the relation of art to morals, and the meaning of art as primarily ethical, depends ultimately on the problem of evil, and until this problem has been solved, art, like other human activities, cannot be wholly good. To those who feel that moral evil is perhaps the greatest reality on the earth, an Oriental conviction which percolates by a clear descent to many American thinkers, any association with this reality throws art under suspicion of being an agent of evil.

Within the last few years art has become a subject of increasing interest to Americans. As keen judges of current interests, the editors of the *Saturday Evening Post* have published numerous articles on art, characteristically taking a reactionary or ultra-conservative attitude.

One writer, in particular, illustrates the Puritan conviction that evil dominates on this earth. He describes the architectural beauties of the market-place in Verona and acknowledges an inferiority on the part of America in the production of art. But what did he see in the market-place at Verona, which immediately damned Italian art and established the superiority of America in the sphere that really counts—practical morality, freedom from evil practices?

"In this ancient and beautiful square," he writes, "about eight o'clock one morning last summer, I counted twelve old women busily plucking sparrows for sale and saving the feathers. Now a heap of plucked sparrows on a little wooden counter, their glassy-eyed heads nearly as large as their meager bodies, makes one of the most dismal spectacles in the foodstuff line that I have ever seen." Later he confidently therefore asserts: "You are entitled to take the high ground that art is unmoral and undemocratic, the concern of a small number of upstage persons who have often set the worst possible examples, or you may take the practical ground that it gets nowhere, being quite unprogressive—in contrast to science." Thus is the civilization of Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Kansas City vindicated; our morals and shrewdness are proved by an exercise in pragmatism to be actually and efficiently superior to Italian art.

Similar conclusions to those of the emissary of America's principal advertising medium were reached by many at the time of the early Christian fathers. They objected to the expression of pathos or strong emotion, especially suffering, exhibited in the work of the Pergamon school, and others of late antiquity. The sort of sculpture which they opposed is illustrated by the famous *Laokoön*. There is enough sin and suffering in the world already, they argued, it should not be increased or perpetuated in the world through art. The spectator used to tolerating evil on the stage, where he is helpless to interfere, will tolerate evil in himself and others, maintaining aesthetic aloofness there also. Such was the view of Lucian, Cassiodorus and St. Basil. Byzantine art by its complete rejection of any illusion of life or passion, represents in its still immobility a complete reaction against the suggestions of human vitality and consequent capacity for evil.

In those civilizations, however, where the plastic arts have been suppressed, public and private morals do not appear to have improved greatly on that account. Ideals of beauty in ethics have not supplanted visual images of beauty in the popular imagination. The Oriental races that have lacked the plastic arts have revelled in an erotic verse, to which western and classical civilization offers few parallels. If the *Song of Songs,* to choose one of the finest of the *genre,* stimulates a reader to deceive those to whom his personal obligations are greatest, or if the poem convinces a reader that ultimate happiness is to be found only in amorous embraces, it will be a creator of liars and itself a lie, more directly and effectively than a statue or painting of Venus.

Such considerations have led many, including even some thoughtful modern critics, to conclude that the innate capacity for evil, and possibly therefore the real negative ethical value of literature exceeds that of the plastic arts. This view is plausible because literature depends mostly on its power of suggesting all sorts of images and sustaining their development in terms of time, as ordinary human experience does also. But a rigid application of this analogy would indicate that on that basis music is the most dangerous of all the arts, and more even than literature demands the supervision of the censor. The Greeks logically concluded, with apparently a keener sensitiveness than we now exercise, that ethical quality was the most important property of music. They stressed its educational function fully as much as they did that of literature. It seems strange that the modern censors concentrate on novels and plays which applaud sexual irregularity. The logic of their own position indicates that they should fear far more the magnetic rhythms and persuasive suggestions of jazz than any novel that was ever written.

Closely united with the problem, whether evil determines merit in art, is the question whether ugly and repulsive things should be represented in art. Is the art of Ribera bad, because he depicts martyrs and beggars convincingly? Is the art of Rembrandt bad because it shows us such things as a butchered ox or an *Old Woman Paring Her Nails*? Is the art of Forain, Brueghel, Callot, or Goya bad because these artists perpetuate the horrors of war? On the other hand, is the *St. Theresa* by Bernini bad because the saint seems to be overcome by amorous ecstasy rather than by a spiritual vision?

Because such things exist in the social reality, is the practice of the naturalist justified, when he dwells at length on the accumulated details of vice and bestial degradation? Is the liberation from repressions a justification for expressing or suggesting sexual abnormalities in modern art? When such evils exist is it likely that their representation in art will either exterminate or multiply them? After the symptoms are suppressed, will the disease be cured?

A sane view sees that art is not responsible fundamentally for the existence of evil, whatever the nature of evil and the solution of the problem may be. The chances that the vivid representation of evil will warn and deter observers seem to be about even with the probabilities that it will lead the weak into temptation. A more recent interpretation of the theory that art warns while it pleases is the idea that art offers a harmless outlet for vague impulses, through imagination rather than through concrete experience. Passion and adventure are to be had better in romantic novels and detective stories than in courses of conduct calculated to afford the immediate satisfactions of passion and adventure. Those who go to the South Sea Islands fare worse than those who stay at home and enjoy pictures and novels about them.

Inductive methods have also been employed to determine whether art exercises positive moral influence. It is, as we have already noted, a favorite educational theory. The theory was tested by an organization which hung a number of paintings in the modern manner in the prison chapel at Sing Sing. Most of the prisoners preferred to witness a baseball game. The widespread idea that the prevalence of crime, especially among adolescents, is due to the motion pictures, has also been tested by experimental investigation. A considerable number of imprisoned criminals have been questionnaired with the aim of discovering to what cause they attribute their lack of success in the criminal career. Not one could be found who would say that motion pictures had anything to do with it.

If the images presented by art are dangerous, how much more so is the power for evil afforded by knowledge. The situation is illustrated by the Public Library at Fifth Avenue and Forty Second Street, New York. At the left of the main entrance is a huge nude statue, neither very provoking nor very artistic, but undoubtedly nude and a statue, which is enough for those whose fear of evil outweighs their hope of good. Millions of people have gazed on this work of art. Inside the library there are books which are available to the same people. So far as the record shows, the statue has not led any observer to commit a crime. But the record does show that the books have led to crimes, not through aesthetic or imaginative suggestions, but through the practical knowledge derived from them. Cases have been found where enterprising counterfeiters acquired the complete knowledge of their trade by using the books in this Public Library. Excepting the theory of evolution and birth control, there is, however, no strong movement at present to restrict knowledge as there is to control art through censorship.

Like other Puritan attacks on art, censorship attempts to eradicate an invisible or inaccessible cause by destroying visible and tangible symptoms. Erskine and many others have vainly pointed out that censorship of the stage tends to emphasize what is bad and to ignore what is good in art. With the necessity of a warrant for search and seizure on private property now an obsolete legal tradition; and the idea that a man is innocent until proved guilty or that a prisoner cannot be forced into damaging admissions, unprotected by counsel, also futile theories unobserved in daily police practice; the rights of free speech and publication guaranteed in the constitution can hardly be expected to survive. Yet lawyers have shown that ever since 1913, when previous censorship of the films became an established practice, it has been the entering wedge for a progressive encroachment on constitutional bulwarks to individual freedom.

Dictatorships, instituted by the personal aggressiveness and will to power of one man, are, after they have gained control of the state, also notoriously sensitive to the independence of art, and under the guise of protecting public morals, an effective censorship can suppress liberty of thought and expression. Under such moral vigilance of freedom as exists in Russia and Italy, instead of living to serve the state and its embodiment in the dictator, art seems to expire.

But the question of probable or possible influence is practically insoluble. It is almost impossible to prove specific immoral effects of art on normal, average personalities. The censors might feel entitled to pass judgment if they could admit evil effects upon themselves from the work in which they engage, or could forecast precisely the vicious consequences of some class of objectionable works of art and then observe the realization of their predictions. This, of course, they are unable or unwilling to do.

Those charged with moral responsibility have the broad duty of creating or encouraging independent personalities, competent themselves to think and judge at their own risk. But they have also a duty to instill an intellectual and emotional agreement with the prevailing standards of social conduct. Such conformity is more apt to aid in the average individual's success in enjoying the goods of life than a contrary course. Works of fine art, if merely ministers to pleasure or instruments of a higher utility, are amenable to the moral law at the level indicated by the character of the work and the intellectual and moral calibre of the judge. If, on the other hand, works of art are considered glimpses into a mystical reality which absolves one from practical responsibility, art is then fundamentally the most immoral agent known to man.

The Ethical and the Moral

The crisis may, however, be alleviated by drawing a distinction between the ethical and the moral. This distinction corresponds to one made in two decorative plaques on the exterior of the Bar Association in New York City. The words inscribed are IVS and LEX, justice and law. One is the abstract quality, the ideal goal of all concrete manifestations, never quite realized in human circumstances. But it is something without which actual laws and their operations are meaningless, being simply barbarous custom, the inert will of the many, by which individuals are as apt to be oppressed as protected. A distinction between art and beauty, similar to that between morals and goodness or ethics, may, indeed, help in understanding the relation between art and morals.

Art as a concrete, sensuous manifestation of the beautiful, when it enters into ordinary relations, is no longer an abstract idea but an object of potential moral as well as aesthetic value. Art as equivalent to beauty is good in itself, but as equivalent to this picture or that poem, while its primary intention may not be to illustrate justice or support any particular piece of legislation, it can enter into moral situations.

But, as Parker points out, art is on this basis fundamentally ethical and fundamentally non-moral, since: "It is fundamentally ethical, for art is itself a freely creative and happy activity, and tends to propagate itself in spontaneity in other fields. . . . On the other hand, the spirit of art is fundamentally non-moral, for the aesthetic attitude is one of sympathy—an attempt at once to express life and to feel at one with it; it demands that we take the point of view of the life expressed and, for the moment at any rate, refrain from a merely external judgment." In spite of the changes in point of view, and the psychological difficulties involved in his statement, it seems, on the whole, to be true that aesthetics is ethical, that beauty is good, that art so far as it is aesthetic is ethical; but if art is un-moral it may also be immoral.

Perry has declared: "Art is subject to moral criticism, because morality is nothing more nor less than the law which determines the whole order of interests, within which art and every other good thing is possible." Morality, in Perry's sense, applies the aesthetic tests of harmony, balance, and so on, which are those of formal beauty and classic architecture. But if a less realistic view is taken of art, and art is made interchangeable with beauty or aesthetic value in general, then art is an element in the good life of society and the individual, and we are faced again with the answer that pragmatism provides for the question: What is good in and for life? Good art is that which is good for somebody, and art is again subject to morals which are then to be considered as an exalted expediency.

Bertrand Russell has an interesting definition of virtue based on social well-being, combined with those human qualities which he admires or deems beautiful. He says: "I shall define as virtues those mental and physical habits which tend to produce a good community, and as vices those that tend to produce a bad one. For my part, I should judge a community to be in a good state if I found a great deal of instinctive happiness, a prevalence of feelings of friendship and affection rather than hatred and envy, a capacity for creating and enjoying beauty, and the intellectual curiosity which leads to the advancement and diffusion of knowledge." This is simply a combination of the Greek ideals of the good, the beautiful, and the true with an insistence on the feeling which would prevail if these fundamental values were ever fully realized together. It is equivalent to saying that the truly ethical state would be that in which what is ethical as well as what is aesthetic are both completely manifest in art and morals. He refuses to rank one higher than the other, and thus avoids the problem which arises when morals are made the sole judge of art.

Art Defended on Ethical Grounds

Art may nevertheless be defended through citing the moral function of the vivid images which it presents to the imagination. The power of sympathy is here also emphasized, but not to the degree that it is by the Puritans. Sir Thomas Elyot declared: "Poetry was the first philosophy that ever was known, whereby men from their childhood were brought to the reason how to live well, learning thereby not only manners and natural affections, but also the wonderful works of Nature, mixing serious matter with things pleasant."

Again, it is remarkable that many radical innovators and even artists whose conduct has been notoriously irregular, appeal to ethical grounds of some sort to justify their theories and actions. Thus Shelley, whose lyric verse approaches as closely as anything in English to what critics today conceive to be pure poetic beauty unmixed with moral considerations, is really fascinated with the ethical problem and attempts to revise moral standards in a fashion to conform with his conduct rather than deny the relevancy of ethics to poetic beauty.

Also, even when it was readily conceded that art is fiction, attempts were made to justify art as a useful lie. This scheme of defense is found in the church Fathers and is carried on through Schiller. According to St. Clement, who did his best to reconcile Greek philosophy and Christian belief, art is not to be condemned unless it actually deceives. Only the really virtuous can read the pagan poets without harm, decided St. Basil, for the effect of the ancient authors on good and bad men is to intensify their natural tendencies. The metaphysical exaltation of art by Philostratus and Callistratus relies on Neoplatonic elements, but even Plutarch admits that he who is deceived by tragedy is wiser than he who is not.

Art Reveals Ethical Order

Art may be also defended on the ground that it reveals the ethical order of the world. That the world is ultimately a rational, orderly construction, that it has an end in view, that failure is only partial and temporary, that there is a dominating progress in nature, all these things may be shown by the work of art. The material of a marble statue is after all but a block of white stone, its physical nature is not changed by the fact that it has been cut out from the side of a cliff and instead of being turned into lime has been taken to a sculptor's studio. Only, while it was still in the natural state it was without form. Through human skill and creative power it was capable of assuming an infinite variety of shapes, potential forms without number could be discerned by the mind in this amorphous matter. But the creative mind of the sculptor determined precisely what form it should take. Through his action the matter acquires a genuinely significant form, its intellectual and ethical values are capable of being known by other human beings. It embodies attractive images of beauty which can be treasured in memory, revived at will, and recognized either in recollection or in the actual substance of stone. Thus the world as we know it, incoherent in appearance, working at cross purposes, judged by individual human interests, always presenting incurable defects which hinder the realization of clear human ideals, may fundamentally be orderly and beautiful in design. The ideal unity becomes knowable because it appears more clearly in contrast to concrete evils which are subordinated to it.

The world of experience as a whole is beyond the control of our artistic powers. But the work of art shows that order is potential in the world, the work of art exhibits order realized on a small scale, and indicates that in the long run and ultimately there may be a lawful idea immanent and partially realized throughout the world. Any human product, it is true, exhibits this truth to a degree, but in the work of art an intellectual perception functions as an immediate communication through aesthetic quality.

In organized society there are many parallels to the idea presented more clearly and persuasively by the work of fine art. To anyone gazing on the stock exchange in session, the obvious things perceived are the noise, the disorder, the apparent futility and aimlessness of the activities in which many human beings are engaged. The chaos seems to make impossible any purpose. Yet there is a strict term set to the duration of these activities, they are being conducted according to rules, an accurate record of all the transactions is continuously compiled and communicated throughout the world; at the end of the session, within a short time, the volume and value of the total operation is known, and every individual can discover the effect upon his fortunes of the group activity in which he has engaged.

The idea that a corporation, with limited capital, may be perpetual, unless dissolved by legal decree or the common consent of its share-holders, and that it is a legal person, apart from and above the activities of its owners and agents, is another familiar example of organized purpose, difficult to realize by observation, but immanent and effective in active existence.

It is an unconquerable human prejudice that the purpose of the world must have good as its goal even though that goal be an emancipating extinction. The work of art, at the very lowest level, is intended to delight, at the highest to reveal beauty as a permanent reality, more substantial and genuine than transient ugliness. This underlying direction, ascribed to works of art and convincingly realized in them, makes the work of art a partial answer to the problem of evil and a justification of human hope. When the work of art is actively apprehended as a medium of beauty it is insofar good. When it is a vehicle for anything less, it is to that extent bad. Art may thus possess ethical value in unsurpassed degree.

Art Proves Our Freedom

The claim that art has ethical value in highest degree is put vividly by Schiller, quoted by Bonsanquet: "Beauty is therefore indeed an object for us, because reflection is the condition under which we have a feeling of it; but at the same time it is a state of our subject, because feeling is the condition under which we can have a perception of it. It is therefore a form, because we contemplate it; it is life, because we feel it. In one word, it is at once our state and our act.

"And just because it is both of these at once, it serves as a triumphant proof that receptivity by no means excluded activity, nor matter, form, nor limitation, infinity,—that therefore the necessary physical dependence of man in no way destroys his moral freedom. It proves this, and, I must add, nothing else can prove it. . . . But as in the enjoyment of beauty or of aesthetic unity there takes place an actual union and interpenetration of matter with form and of receptivity with activity, this very fact demonstrates the compatibility of the two natures, the realisableness of the infinite in the finite, and therefore the possibility of the most sublime humanity.

"We ought, therefore, no longer to be in perplexity to find a passage from sensuous dependence to moral freedom, seeing that in beauty a case is given wherein the latter is able perfectly to co-exist with the former, and man is not obliged to escape from matter in order to assert himself as a spirit."

Ethical Justification of Art in Aristotle

One of the most interesting aspects of Aristotle's *Poetics* is that it affords an ethical justification of art, especially of poetry. The term catharsis, introduced in his definition of tragedy, is not clear in meaning, and it is extremely improbable that Aristotle himself had any inkling of the German transcendental and psychological interpretations which would be read into his aesthetics, through the narrow door left open by the obscurity of that term. Judging, however, by Aristotle's own references to the subject elsewhere, and by the unanimous opinion of antiquity and critical thought until the time of Bernays in the nineteenth century, the catharsis theory is part of an ethical justification of poetry against the strictures of Plato.

But many of the modern interpretations of this clause in the *Poetics* dwell on the ethical aspect also. Nietzsche, like Hegel, speaks of the moral value of superior insight yielded by the contemplation of tragedy. In it the emotions are sublimated, poetry and art show man that it is possible for him to gratify his passions otherwise than by indulging them on the level where such indulgence may be anti-social, and therefore immoral.

Other writers, like Carritt, stress the relation between a capacity for response to beauty and for the creation of beautiful things to a capacity for the perception of ethical value and the willed pursuit of ethical purposes. The vivid anticipation of a wide variety of possible choices and their probable consequences, made available to the individual through aesthetic sensitiveness and a practiced imagination, alone permit genuinely ethical action. A determined and active preference for the good can be realized only in the presence of alternatives. The aesthetic self and the ethical self are not, after all, shut up in separate compartments; in the unified self aesthetics contributes to ethics because it increases the possibility of genuine ethics, art serves morals in the highest sense.

If, on the other hand, the life-enhancing value of things is their ultimate justification in morals, the measure in which things contribute to the richness and significance of life, then art is a most moral field of activity and experience, because of its symbolic function. Life, too, corrects all immoralities; those things which do not contribute to life in this way, must perish. The immoral is the anti-vital. Art, however, is more permanent than the individual life which produces it. The particular Greeks who produced the Parthenon, and Greek civilization as a whole, have ceased to exist, but the Parthenon remains. Thus art is a sort of palaeontology of the human spirit. Only through the art that men leave can their spiritual achievements and in the last analysis, their ethical characters, be ascertained. In art their ethical acts in the past are knowable, and we can see how they were good.

Art Revises Morals in the Interest of Ethics

Conflict between ethics and morals, however, is in human experience unavoidable. Art, indeed, makes the breach between ethics and morals all the more conspicuous. The correspondence and divergence of ethical and aesthetic judgment intensifies the problem. Mme. de Staël was one of the first to define literature as the expression of society, and by society she seems to have meant the fashionable and ruling group. Such a conception opens the way for Tolstoy's hostility to art on ethical grounds; it is wrong that beauty should be subject to or determined by class privilege. On the other hand, it is popular morality, rather than fashionable sophistication, which becomes ridiculous when customary morality and traditional art come into conflict. The nude figures in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* were draped at the instance of his enemy Pietro Aretino, a man of the lowest moral type, who was clever enough to enroll popular moral indignation in his effort to humiliate the great artist. Greek statues are adorned with fig-leaves to satisfy conventional scruples. It is thus wrong, too, that beauty should be humiliated and imprisoned by class prejudice.

The chief reason why a strain is felt, why difficulties are experienced, in harmonizing the claims of art and morals, is that the rate of speed at which both are revised is not the same. Estimates of ethical, as well as aesthetic value, in given instances of conduct and art, gradually change. Yet they do not alter in both spheres at the same pace, they rarely concur in the present, individuals and groups are hardly ever consistent in their judgments of precisely what things are beautiful and good. But because our opinions and estimates in art and morals do not coincide, because they are not parallel in their course, comparison between the two becomes possible. Art encourages a critical attitude towards morals, it stimulates us to revise our moral customs in the interest of ethics. In the ideal realm it is inconceivable that ethics and aesthetics should be radically antagonistic. But in the world of concrete human endeavor, art and morals observably do conflict. A continual process of mutual concession and compromise is thus brought about, an activity that develops intellectual perception of ethical and aesthetic value instead of mere profit and pleasure.

It is extremely difficult for the contemporary critic to judge what the prevailing moral and artistic standards of his day are, since the differences and inconsistencies are frequently more conspicuous than the agreements and harmonies. But this is not so in the long historical perspective. When we study the distant past we see no radical inconsistency in the prevailing morals and the art works produced; the inequalities and irregularities are largely eliminated in a contemplative and analytical act where aesthetic considerations dominate. What an age of the past finally and significantly esteemed good in life and conduct is seen to bear a necessary and natural relation to what was esteemed good in art. This situation affects the present, because whatever we conceive to be the relative importance and authority of specific ethical and aesthetic judgments, the values which they determine always co-exist: art and morals always are. Viewed from the historical approach, it appears, as Parker puts it, that "art may conflict with a conformist morality but not with a genuine and rational ethics." Thus art and morals supplement one another. But art, as something constantly stimulating an ethical criticism of current morals, can do so only on condition that it be free. Dictatorships do well, therefore, to suppress the freedom of art.

The problem whether art is ethical but not invariably moral, is also affected by the question whether art is passive enjoyment rather than active participation. Clearly, if the highest degree of ethical quality attaches only to voluntary acts done with knowledge of their probable consequences, passive enjoyment is low in the ethical scale. If the intellect and will are to be suspended in their activity, while the feelings are to be exercised pleasantly; if the emotions are, like the waters of a shallow lake, merely to respond to the artistic breeze, the aesthetic experience is of little ethical significance.

But if the aesthetic experience requires active participation, then it is possible for the experience to acquire an ethical function. By an effort of the will and the intellect, all the faculties may be beneficially exercised, and thus art may become a part of the rational, self-controlled, purposeful life. For this reason, criticism, as the search for meaning, is of extreme importance in dealing with art.

A cow, gazing at a field of clover, when hungry and presented with no physical obstacles, is mainly a passive agent. The meaning of the sight can hardly be more than a very elementary pleasure; the cow approaches the clover and eats automatically. The animal's relation to her passive enjoyment is devoid of ethical quality. But the farmer who sows the clover, in order that it may feed the cow, and that the cow's milk may provide good things in life for him and his family, does something that has an elementary ethical quality. The observer who gazes on one of Monet's impressionistic studies of a field, and judges that the only possible reaction to the canvas is to relax his will and mind, exposing his faculties for pleasure to a mild and innocent stimulus from the sight, is not far enough from the attitude of the cow toward the field of clover to qualify his act as genuinely aesthetic or ethical.

A more rational attitude would be to realize that the painting is not a spontaneous act of nature, like the growth of the clover. The painting is a human product. Then, too, out of the immense variety and confusion of the landscape, the artist has selected one particular spot. In spite of apparent confusion in the impressionistic technique he has intelligently, through manipulation of his means to his purposed end, limited his scene within the boundaries of his frame. He has disposed his spots of color and his vague shapes so that we realize in and through his painting the delicious and stimulating brilliance of atmosphere and vegetation in full sunlight. Even in impressionist painting, where intellectual elements seem least effective, the shaping and creative mind is present. Thus a mental achievement as well as a positive stimulus of pleasure can be recognized in the work of art and the willed process of discovering intellectual values in art is a way in which criticism may preserve the proper relation between the art object and the observer.

Religious Art, an Example of Moral Art

Let us now consider some art objects which might be cited as evidence bearing on the dispute whether the goodness of a work of art is to be determined mainly on ethical grounds. Probably one of the most obvious proofs that could be employed to show that art does serve morality, and make it seem plausible that art is to be judged by its moral value and the efficiency of its ethical function, is to be found in religious art. The Metropolitan Museum, like most European collections, has numerous paintings portraying the Madonna and Child, to the despair and confusion of the hasty tourist.

Many of the abiding masterpieces of art have been produced to illustrate religious beliefs, to serve religious purposes, and to stimulate the prayers and sacrifices of the believer, while presenting visible and individual images to his contemplation and recollection. Only secondarily have any considerations of pleasure, or delight in the senses for their own sake, been introduced. Whatever we may suppose of the moral effects upon observers and worshippers exerted by some Oriental idols, we should hardly be so bold as to declare that panel paintings of the Virgin and Child normally led to actions which generally were immoral rather than good. During the period of their prosperity, ethical standards have been deliberately combined with religious cults and practices, and thus art as the servant and illustrator of religion, has consciously contributed to an ethical end.

With a measure of charity, we may presume that pictures of the Madonna and Child were usually intended to be and actually were moral agents. We might also expect religious purpose to be inconsistent with the glorification of pagan deities, or representations of the Madonna and saints in which quite human charm was stressed rather than piety and devotion, but such is not the case. In the religious art of the Italian Renaissance, pagan myths were depicted and pagan deities were favorite subjects of sculpture and painting. *St. Theresa* by Bernini is herself the heroine of a passionate and erotic romance rather than a stimulus to exemplary conduct. Thus, while religious art is often moral in purpose, not all religious art is therefore primarily moral.

Price as an Index of Moral Worth

In the Metropolitan Museum there is also an admired example of Rubens, representing *Venus and Adonis*. The lady is, characteristically of the Flemish artist, a florid voluptuous nude. Furthermore, she is the heroine of a pagan legend, and that myth does not present a course of action which would be recommended as laudable conduct. Puritans would say that whatever the technical ability of the artist, the historical interest and importance of the canvas, the intellectual and aesthetic delight to be had from analyzing the symphonies of line, swirling masses, and vibrant color, all this is as nothing compared with the suggestiveness of the subject. This picture, however, has value; its economic worth, measured by its price, is a fact in our contemporary situation.

Price, indeed, is an index of value. It is an abstract statement, in terms of an exchangeable unit, indicating the competitive desirability of the thing priced. As a result of effort or some productive activity, it shows the immediate value to society of the work done in the judgment of that society. The corresponding units of currency are dollars. But money has no intrinsic value; it is valued for what it will buy, the good things which it can secure, the power which comes from prudent spending or unspent funds. Furthermore, money does not exist solely in currency, not even in bank bills, but the greater volume of money is in the form of credits. In an industrial and capitalistic society no good human product may be had without some money, and however cheap, anything made or done can be expressed in terms of money. Money is thus the universal symbol of moral activity, for it is the most common denominator in terms of which the cost and the profit of our activities can be measured. Most people will acknowledge that money in itself is not virtuous or evil, but is an agent of morality, a necessary element in bringing good into existence. Money is potentially an instrument of morality, price is an actual expression of moral value; it expresses men's effective and competitive judgments of relative desirability among things that may be purchased as contributions to the goodness of life.

Financial theory and engineering practice currently indicate that goodness or badness as ethical adjectives or determinations of value, are vague, rather emotional qualifications, pertinent to a patriarchal system or to the city-state, where individual will had more scope and was more immediately recognized. Price is an exact and modern statement, under the conditions of the society which actually exists, of what things are worth. It is taken for granted that an industrial and capitalistic society is on the whole a good thing and we should be willing to waive theoretical doubts for the sake of very tangible and widespread benefits.

Now the painting of *Venus and Adonis* by Rubens was acquired for the Metropolitan collection at a price. The price is not at hand, but let us suppose that it cost $200,000 and would bring even more than that if offered today at public auction. There is also in the same collection a large painting by Sargent, for which, it is said, $90,000 was paid not long ago. Does this mean that the value of the Rubens, intrinsically as art, is almost three times that of the Sargent? Or is it a thousand times as fine, regardless of the prices paid? If moral function and effect determine artistic value, if ethical judgment establishes the meaning of art works, then the more exact and flexible moral unit of price should be equally applicable and more definite in its measured results.

Again, if it costs ten dollars a week to send a poor boy to a summer camp, the Sargent painting's cost is equivalent to keeping nine thousand boys at a camp for a week. At six per cent, the capital represented by the Sargent painting would yield enough revenue to keep a professor or a clergyman and all his successors in comfort. Accordingly, the money was ill-spent. On the other hand, the receipts almost any night in the year by Broadway theatres, restaurants, and night clubs would buy a number of such Sargents. The Sargent's value does not fade away quickly, it is a permanent source of artistic pleasure to some people and it serves to perpetuate conventional ideals of Anglo-Saxon femininity. Accordingly, in comparison with more popular luxuries, the money was well spent.

Those who hold that morality is the criterion of aesthetic excellence should feel that only an ineradicable Platonic prejudice, a deep-rooted obscurantism, reactionary blindness to the light of what actually is, can be our reason for refusing to see that we must use price to measure aesthetic merit, and decide the goodness or badness of a work of art in terms of dollars.

An Art Which Really Is Moral

At the Metropolitan Museum there is a department where the products of a more humble art than sculpture or painting are produced. Although not masterpieces, and often falling below the average, the products of this art are undoubtedly desirable, for in fact they are more frequently and persistently desired, than the art works shown in the galleries above. The products of this art satisfy more completely than the works of fine art the criteria and experimental tests associated with the fine arts, when they are judged exclusively from the moral point of view.

That art is the art of cooking, and the place where its results are to be enjoyed is the museum cafeteria. Everything there has a price, it is perfectly possible to compare the satisfactions derived from one glass of milk with those derived from one bowl of lamb stew, and measure them in money. Cooking, in addition to this modern, quantitative measurement, meets the other tests associated with the moral position. It pleases the sense of taste, and it has an agreeable temperature, as well as delightful odor; to eat requires a voluntary activity on our part, but the experience is mainly passive as we sense the immediate pleasures of taste, temperature, and smell. Cooking is an extremely useful art, by it farmers and cooks are enabled to live happy lives. It contributes to preserving the health of those who eat; it is a vital necessity. Cooking is good in the pragmatic and utilitarian sense, because its effects are good, it is an essential prerequisite to all good human activities. Cooking is true in several senses: on the average the diet's ingredients are suited to the scientifically determinable needs of the bodily organism. When we believe that we are eating nourishing food, we usually are doing so and not imbibing poisons. Our preferences in eating, as distinguished from those of cannibals and wolves, meet with the approval of millions of people in the civilization of which we are members. Thus cooking affords an art fully answering the tests which we found so difficult to apply satisfactorily to the fine arts. As fine arts more fully approximate the characteristics of the art of cooking, judged by the moral test, the better they illustrate the priority of such judgment.

But if beauty is not simply a species of the morally good, if fine art is not a refined and complex sort of cooking, we may conclude that ethics is not the essence of aesthetics, nor morals of art. Ethics must have aesthetic value and an art object is an element in a moral world, yet that does not make ethical value the fundamental meaning of art.

CHAPTER IV

IS PLEASURE THE MEANING OF ART?

Before proceeding to discuss the theory that the secret of art is imitation, it is well first to take up another very popular principle, which claims that pleasure is the meaning of art. Pleasure is often a subordinate element in the moralist's disapproval of art and enters also into many interpretations of the theory of imitation, forming a sort of link between the two. As an independent principle, pleasure may be considered an inclusive meaning which covers various emotional ideas of art, for works of art are thus declared to be primarily things which are produced under the stress of emotion and which in turn stimulate states of feeling. The satisfaction derived from the emotional origin and function of art is said to be one of relief, when passion is separated from the self and transferred to an external object.

That feeling is attached to an object and no longer adheres to the self alone, is the distinction which makes art different from other satisfactions of emotion. When a man knocks down another who has insulted him, or wins a race, the emotion is not objectified as it is in art, but it is definitely a satisfaction of the active subject. It is realized to be a state of consciousness and not thought to be a quality of some object. When art stimulates emotion, we may consider that it does so chiefly through vivid images of things that are imitated, so that imitation and ethical significance are frequently found in close association with the belief that pleasure is the meaning of art, since the moralist usually holds that emotion inevitably leads to action.

That art does yield pleasure is the fact on which this theory is based. It has attracted thinkers in all ages, from

Plato to Santayana. When aesthetic phenomena are studied as psychological activities, or measurable physiological changes, it is also customary to classify them as pleasures, under the broad division of all psychological reactions as either pleasure or pain. This is the simplest explanation adopted in the laboratory; art is a kind of pleasure, and the value of the art object may be measured by the average or normal physiological changes which it excites in the person observed. Whatever else art is, it is pleasant and it is a human product as well as a human experience. Psychology resolved into measurable physiological changes has caused many earnest thinkers to hope that they might find here the final answer to the problem, What is art? Patience, ingenuity, and precision should give us a quantitative index, and an infallible guide to what art is, and what is good and bad in art.

Some aestheticians also have treated the whole field of art theory as an investigation of pain and pleasure. Marshall's book is, indeed, entitled *Pain, Pleasure and Aesthetics,* and it is largely devoted to the physical basis of those emotions, for he believes "that aesthetics may with propriety be considered as a branch of hedonics; as being dependent directly upon pleasure laws and indirectly therefore upon the laws of pain."

Beauty and Pleasure Identified by Santayana

Americans are apt to find their most persuasive source for the idea that the essence of art is pleasure in the charming language of Santayana. An early book, *The Sense of Beauty,* a combination of Platonism and the materialistic psychology popular in the latter nineteenth century, expressed in Emersonian periods, is a work in which Santayana systematically presents this point of view.

He first affirms that value derives from vital and irrational impulse. "We may therefore at once assert this axiom, important for all moral philosophy and fatal to certain stubborn incoherences of thought, that there is no value apart from some appreciation of it, and no good apart from some preference of it before its absence or its opposite. In appreciation, in preference, lies the root and essence of all excellence. Or, as Spinoza clearly expresses it, we desire nothing because it is good, but it is good only because we desire it. . . . Values spring from the immediate and inexplicable reaction of vital impulse, and from the irrational part of our nature."

But on which side is the weight of inexplicability to be cast in the scales of value? On the side of our resulting experience or on that of its source? We suppose we know and feel what actually is, and not that which is not, but whether appreciation originates or follows upon existence is not arbitrarily to be asserted. That the good is preferable seems obvious, but to make preference and value identical or related as cause and effect is a step that in itself requires justification. It may be as logical to say we cannot explain why we prefer the good as to say we cannot explain why the good is preferable. But this emphatic assertion on Santayana's part, that preference determines value, because we actually prefer that which has value, is a preliminary step to his stating that beauty is a sort of value.

"It is evident," he says, "that beauty is a species of value, and what we have said of value in general applies to this particular kind. A first approach to a definition of beauty has therefore been made by the exclusion of all intellectual judgments, all judgments of fact or of relation." He continues, a few pages later: "Aesthetic and moral judgments are accordingly to be classed together in contrast to judgments intellectual; they are both judgments of value, while intellectual judgments are judgments of fact. If the latter have any value, it is only derivative, and our whole intellectual life has its only justification in its connexion with our pleasures and pains." Here, perhaps a little too early in the argument, appears the easy and sometimes indolent philosophy of hedonism, which depresses the intellect in favor of what is pleasant both in contemplation and in action.

Santayana distinguishes between aesthetic and ethical value, within the hedonistic sphere, as between positive and negative. He says: "The relation between aesthetic and moral judgments, between the spheres of the beautiful and the good, is close, but the distinction between them is important. One factor of this distinction is that while aesthetic judgments are mainly positive, that is, perceptions of good, moral judgments are mainly and fundamentally negative, or perceptions of evil. Another factor of the distinction is that whereas, in the perception of beauty, our judgment is necessarily intrinsic and based on the character of the immediate experience, and never consciously on the idea of an eventual utility in the object, judgments about moral worth, on the contrary, are always based, when they are positive, upon the consciousness of benefits probably involved."

In that case, the realms to be classified are not the beautiful and the good, but the beautiful and the evil, and it is strange that the world has erred so long, dividing values into the beautiful and the good. Plato was far from the truth, too, in holding that we desire the good because it is beautiful.

Santayana, it would seem to many, still further disparages the dignity of art when he expands on this distinction: "The appreciation of beauty and its embodiment in the arts are activities which belong to our holiday life, when we are redeemed for the moment from the shadow of evil and the slavery to fear, and are following the bent of our nature where it chooses to lead us. The values, then, with which we here deal are positive; they were negative in the sphere of morality. The ugly is hardly an exception, because it is not the cause of any real pain. In itself, it is rather a source of amusement. If its suggestions are vitally repulsive, its presence becomes a real evil towards which we assume a practical and moral attitude. And, correspondingly, the pleasant is never, as we have seen, the object of a truly moral injunction."

This point of view is amazingly Calvinistic in its implications, and seems to be tinged with the spirit of the Puritans in the Boston of the author's early education. "The shadow of evil and the slavery of fear" are not the ruling motives and daily lot of all, elsewhere, and the good is not that which we do when we act through fear and avoid pain. To prize art as the sphere of carefree activity, an unreal, and irresponsible holiday interlude, and merely for that reason, is almost as superficial an analysis of the matter as to suppose that good actions are those done through fear. The peace of contemplation and the rest of an achieved goal are not luxuries because they are infrequent.

We are often exhorted to love God because of the beauty of his holiness. We may also plausibly hold that only that is truly good which is beautiful in anticipation and recollection, and what is beautiful here and now is a present good. In short, Santayana's eagerness to emphasize his distinction between the good and the beautiful leads him into a very common error involved in such exaggerations. It is the fallacy of confounding what is obviously different as consequently positive and negative. There is thought to be an easily established opposition between ethics and aesthetics, because they are different, but this difference is translated into positive and negative values. Good and evil are opposite pairs and so are beauty and ugliness, but it is not thereby proved that beauty and evil are the poles of qualitative reality. Such a simple conclusion, based on an abuse of arithmetic proportion, is troubled by the fact that if beauty and evil are values, truth is probably a value also. In any case, it seems an error in formal logic to identify opposition and absence, to equate the evil opposed to good with that which is present where beauty is not.

After having asserted that beauty is value positive and immediate, Santayana finds it necessary to distinguish between aesthetic and physical pleasures, for "all pleasures are intrinsic and positive values, but all pleasures are not perceptions of beauty." His explanation is this: "Aesthetic pleasures have physical conditions, they depend on the activity of the eye and the ear, of the memory and the other ideational functions of the brain. But we do not connect those pleasures with their seats except in physiological studies; the ideas of their bodily causes. The pleasures we call physical, and regard as low, on the contrary, are those which call our attention to some part of our own body, and which make no object so conspicuous to us as the organ in which they arise. . . . This illusion in art of disembodiment is very exhilarating, while immersion in the flesh and confinement to some organ gives a tone of grossness and selfishness to our consciousness."

The superiority in value of art compared with physical satisfactions, then, arises from an exhilarating illusion. We think that the pleasure is not in us but in the beautiful object. It is difficult to judge between illusions on that basis, however, for if we imagine that our hands feel warm we are then as much victims of illusion as if we imagine the hands of *Mona Lisa* are beautiful. In one case we behold something pleasant, and our eyes tell us so; in the other we feel something pleasant, and our hands tell us so. It is, however, a simple matter to show that the satisfaction of our eyes is not in our visual organs, nor the pleasure of our hands in our finger-tips, but if anywhere, it is in our brains. Neither visual nor tactile sensations dwell exclusively in the organs through which we perceive them.

Santayana next contends that the differentia of aesthetic pleasure cannot be found in its disinterestedness nor in its universality, but in its objectification. He outlines a psychology of perception which is no longer held with the same confidence as in the days when he wrote, and his theory of science is even less sure. He continues: "In ourselves, where nearness makes observation difficult, we still appeal to the efficacy of will and ideas, as also in the remote night of cosmic and religious problems. But in all the intermediate realms of vulgar day, where mechanical science has made progress, the inclusion of emotional or passionate elements in the concept of the reality would now be an extravagance. Here our idea of things is composed exclusively of perceptual elements, of the ideas of form and of motion.

"The beauty of objects, however, forms an exception to this rule. Beauty is an emotional element, a pleasure of ours, which nevertheless we regard as a quality of things. But we are not now prepared to understand the nature of this exception. It is the survival of a tendency originally universal to make every effect of a thing upon us a constituent of its conceived nature." Beauty in art, therefore, would be a relic of psychological barbarism, as Comte and Hegel hint, and the contradiction of a value which we appreciate but do not refer to an organic seat, is accepted and made the special mark of its distinction.

Santayana finally comes to his definition of beauty. He asserts: "We have now reached our definition of beauty, which, in the terms of our successive analysis and narrowing of the conception, is value positive, intrinsic, and objectified. Or, in less technical language, Beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing."

Pleasure and Art, in Plato

A great deal of the defective as well as the meritorious in Plato's thought is due to the fact that the city in which he lived was a self-contained, integral unit, but it was at the same time only a large-sized town. The view that in and through such a town, the ideal and perfect goal of human existence was to be achieved dominated his thought on other matters where modern conditions have rendered much of his political speculation obsolete. Characteristic Greek satisfaction with the near, the tangible, and the clearly seen, found political finality in a state that could be realized in the same way. Such a satisfaction entailed a loss of that historical perspective in which we today possess the possibility of wider vision and a corrective of local prejudice. Plato himself therefore failed to draw explicitly from his own principles those conclusions which later ages readily and almost unconsciously derived from him. Long after his time other thinkers revised his theory, offsetting in Alexandria and under the Roman Empire those shortcomings of his specific judgments due to his contemporary situation, through their subsequent experience of a widespread Empire and more inclusive culture.

Plato's own theory combines the imitation and the pleasure principles. As a pleasant diversion, art must not in any case interfere with the stern necessity of active citizenship in the state. The reason why art is pleasant is that it imitates things which are in themselves pleasant, but immediate enjoyment of which would be dangerous or wrong. Paradoxically the imitation, instead of being weaker than the original, is often more stirring, and this strange potency of art makes it necessary for the guardian philosopher, who alone can truly judge art, to reject or rigidly control art forms in accordance with fixed types. He must deliberately exclude the possibility of a freedom or originality which would be dangerous to the logical, stereotyped form of the state, and thus he reduces art to a limited, didactic function. Even here, the task of inculcating virtue is better achieved through force of example, and that direction of thought was adopted by the Epicureans, whom we might be tempted to suppose favorable to art, on account of their fundamental hedonism. But it was Epicurus, indeed, who declared that the philosopher would prefer to live rather than write a poem. Plato also held that even the imitation of indifferent things should be forbidden, for the effort which might well be spent on imitating admirable things, if spent on lesser objects, undermines the strength of one's character.

Like several other notable doctrines of popular philosophy, the theory that art is pleasure has the plausibility that inheres in the statement because of the obvious truth of the negative form of the same statement. Thus, it is apparent that if a sonnet of Shakespeare does not please a man, so far as he is concerned, it is not art. That is, whatever its value for the historian and the scholar, the learned or the sensitive critic, the sonnet is not an art form, individually realized as possessing a vital, moving content of beauty, if the reader or hearer is not stirred with a favorable emotion.

An individual man exists as an individual only on condition that he is a being determined by time and space; he actually is only because he is here, in this place, and now, at this time. For the individual, so conditioned, what does not please is not art for him; it is not what it might be. It is next assumed that in the abstract what does not please is not art. Then, because it is thought that in all cases, anywhere, any time, what does not please is not art, the converse is true, what does please is art, pleasure is the essence of art. But nothing in art pleases everybody at all times, so that the universal meaning of art cannot be arrived at through averaging the instances. The meaning of art is not, therefore, to be arrived at through the converse of negative examples.

The educator often collides with the same logical difficulty in teaching literature or the history of art. The masterpieces or, as they are called carelessly, the classics, are expounded and presented to the pupils' admiration, who are told that they ought to enjoy these things. As a rule they do not, or they do so for a reason of which teachers disapprove. However secretly, many teachers do nourish the theory that art is instructive and that art pleases, as its essential marks. They cannot in most cases specifically prove that it has taught their hearers much of anything, and obviously all art does not please many of them. Thus the teachers are depressed and benumbed with continual evidence against the theories they hold precious, because they at least find support for their ethical and other views in art, and if not in all the examples they use in teaching, in some few they may find pleasure.

An act of charity or a heroic sacrifice for another and weaker person are noteworthy acts of virtue, under appropriate conditions. But a pauper in a public institution cannot practice philanthropy; his duty is to accept his lot without complaint. If thousands of paupers had charity in various great examples daily taught to them, it would not only be useless but an insult since they are themselves the object of the state's charity. It would be almost as futile and if possible more cruel, to teach cripples the duty of life-saving as practiced by firemen and life guards.

It is possible to teach a class of students in physics with a text-book published twenty-five years ago, and without a laboratory. Students can be made to memorize the formulas and reasons following closely the observation of processes made by the author of the text-book. It would be a very old-fashioned method; it would hardly be more antiquated however than the contents of that text-book. What was once scientific truth is profoundly qualified today. And even when he uses a more recent text-book, the student who does not perform at least the routine laboratory exercises lacks a conviction and personal belief in the truth of what he studies.

Thus both with regard to ethics and physical science, which may be taken as types of goodness and truth, good concepts and true concepts are not absolute and unconditioned, or in every case capable of being conveyed to the chance collection of individuals in a school-room by their reasoned enunciation and frequent reiteration. It is, of course, true that the normal individual has a capacity to grasp the simple elements of average ethics and science, but he accepts them on authority and agrees to them in obedience to socially approved impulse. That every and any man does not understand the quantum theory, and cannot understand it, is no real argument against its truth. That not everybody can be a hero is no proof against the ethical value of heroic actions. It is strange, then, that we should suppose everybody and anybody able instantly and always to appreciate art works fully.

The path of minimum resistance and maximum intensity does not lead directly to what is right and beautiful. This is true whether private or public pleasure be the aim. It is precisely the easy and coarser pleasures which can approximate quantitative comparison. The pleasures which require least effort to enjoy are the most accessible to the human animal, and if intensity of sensation or quantity of satisfying emotion determined the rank of a pleasure, it is highly improbable that animal intelligence would have needed to advance very far beyond the brutes. Having once discovered how to make intoxicating drinks, man would never have taken the trouble to become an artist. The pains and pleasures which may be used to control trained seals do not seem to govern men so far as they cease to be animals, and we do not judge our fellows exclusively on the basis of their automatic reponse to the pleasures and pains attending their activities.

The life of practice, therefore, probably holds no deeper disappointments and affords no profounder grounds for bitterness than befall the man who holds that the essence of art is pleasure and then discovers that all art does not invariably please.

Pleasure as the Essence of Morals

If art is pleasure, it naturally also falls under the strict moralist's ban, in spite of its pretentions to didactic value. It may be claimed that the emotion associated with art is different from the satisfactions associated with eating because it is higher in rank, and more spiritual, because it is an intellectual as well as a sensory delight. Envy, hatred, malice, and dreams of revenge should in that case be considered. These, too, are very keen and they are also mental or spiritual pleasures. But they are condemned by morals and ethics. No doubt the active experience of hating and surpassing a rival conductor is sometimes a more intense one than directing the orchestra in its interpretation of an acknowledged masterpiece. It may be said that to sublimate the dream of revenge in music or drama is a good thing because the dreamer's impulses are purged. He is satisfied without harm to anybody, not even himself, and with its vicarious satisfaction his impulse disappears. There is little sound reason, however, to suppose that homicidal wishes will be more than temporarily satisfied through an indulgence of dreams of revenge in music.

William James went so far as to advise that even when good images were aroused in the mind through art, when impulses approved by ethics were stimulated, the effect on character would be bad unless the person so affected deliberately sought an occasion to realize that impulse in virtuous action.

It may also be contended that pleasure should be admitted as the essence of art even when it is ruled out as the essence of morality. In the life of action, pleasure disappears with the consummation of enjoyment but if the essence of art consists in pleasure attributed to the object, as its quality and not our act, permanence and freedom from the cycle of desire are gained. This might form a plausible distinction between the delights associated with drinking wine and those of sculpture. But when we consider music, we find that it has been valued and explained as itself embodying the movement of the will, the pursuit of desire, and the attainment of a satisfaction or peace at the end which is not simply the pleasure felt while the music is being played. The same analysis has been interestingly developed in connection with the drama.

That beauty is pleasure is as unsound a theory as the principle that the good is what pleases. If either were essentially pleasure it would be possible to elaborate tables of equivalents, and we could, for example, see that the comfort of a modest apartment for one month's time is exactly equivalent to one hundred average contributions to the church collection plate, to four hundred admissions to the Metropolitan Museum on pay days, or to four hundred admissions to a motion picture theatre.

It is improper to say that this is a coarse interpretation of the hedonistic calculus, on the ground that the pleasure found in the museum is of a different kind from that found in eating at one's own table. If pleasure is the essence of art as well as a quality of other things, pleasures must be comparable, to afford any basis of judgment. A dollar's worth of one thing can be compared with a dollar's worth of another, and the pleasures, the promised satisfactions of desire, should be correspondingly measured. When an item whose price is identical with that of another affects one's choice or estimate of potential satisfaction, apart from the relative pleasure involved, it is because of other essential qualities, pleasure as the criterion of value has proved useless, and together with the collapse of the criterion its function as a distinction disappears.

That virtuous actions afford satisfaction to the man who deliberately and with an appreciation of their value, acts virtuously, does not prove that the essence of his act consists in the pleasure anticipated or realized in so doing. That the man who discovers a scientific truth for the first time, or conquers its difficulties anew for himself, experiences a deep pleasure in his achievement, also fails to establish the principle that pleasure is the essence of truth. Similarly, it is unsound to say that pleasure is the essence of art or beauty, because what does not please an individual is not beautiful for him.

To evade this contradiction, it is often claimed that not pleasure in general constitutes the essence of the good, or the true, or beauty in art, but a particular kind of pleasure, a proper or corresponding pleasure in each sphere. If, then, the distinction of the beautiful is not pleasure in general, but the pleasure associated exclusively with art, it is not pleasure which distinguishes and separates art from other objects of thought. The art in it is what distinguishes and separates that particular pleasure from other sorts of pleasure, and the claim fails.

How Pleasure is Found in Art

In some expositions of this principle, the meaning of the term, pleasure, is stretched to the point where it seems to be identical with the realization in time of the expansive force of the will, or appetition in general. As the emotional tone accompanying the individual's exercise of his own powers it thus becomes an integral element of all experience. But even if this view were justified, we should find that the differentia of art in contrast to other sorts of pleasure would not lie in the pleasure but in the art, and thus would not function as a distinction of that which in fact distinguishes it.

To assert that pleasure is not the essence of beauty is, however, very different from saying that happiness has nothing to do with art. It is the experience of poets and art-lovers, as well as of others who are able to perceive beauty, and do perceive it in the presence of appropriate objects, under adequate conditions, that the deepest and most abiding happiness is to be found there. Such profound satisfactions are not the cause or essence of the aesthetic activity, but its consequences which may properly be anticipated in imagination and stimulate the vital impulse to aesthetic acts and relations. Moreover, the happiness found in the aesthetic activity extends to objects other than those of fine arts, so that in an imagined goal or a contemplated result, it is the aesthetic quality which gives greatest immediate value or happiness to the scientist's achievement, to the good man's virtuous acts.

A formulation of this theory, less popular today, is that art is related to play, the spontaneous discharge of superfluous energy. The man who plays is no longer laboring under moral or economic necessity, but is free to act and create spiritually; thus art is spiritual play at its purest or highest. The origin of the Greek drama goes back through the religious festival, to the sacred dance, and thence back to the rhythmic excitement of rustic crowds led by a religious enthusiast.

This variation of the theory was widely accepted at one time and is still retained in certain circles. Even if it were true, it would afford another instance of the confusion of origin and value. If play is free, spontaneous activity, and is considered to be the thing that distinguishes the origin of the drama, this does not account for its essential qualities as a completed result. Going back to the beginnings of the drama, in a primitive state of society, it is, however, far more probable that the herd instinct of fear was uppermost. Coming down to the end result in modern competitive sports or in organized orchestras, play and even pleasure are not the dominant actual qualities. Prize-fighters are not playing and neither are the individual members of the football teams on the field, in spite of the myth that amateur athletes work for the game's own sake. Musicians playing in an orchestra are so deafened with the sounds of their own instruments and of those in their immediate neighborhood that they cannot actually hear the total effect, which is the aim of the composer and the experience of the fortunate section of the audience occupying good seats. Not a member of the whole orchestra, indeed, is extemporizing, he is doing his allotted share in the performance, and he contributes to rendering a calculated and extraordinarily sophisticated composition.

There is one feature of art as pleasant playing which Croce points out; that morality is rarely interpreted in terms of play nor is its origin found in play. Nevertheless a very narrow and rigid morality actually rules in games or sports and makes them possible. Not abstract ethics but a mechanical, arbitrary set of moral rules governs tennis and football. You cannot invent special rules so that you can run outside the field and cross the goal line from in back, you cannot do so even on the grounds of higher ethics, because it is more just for your side to win after having lost for many years, or for any other such plausible reason. If there is any aesthetic quality in sports, it does not directly depend on the amateur or professional standing of the opponents but on the attitude of the spectators.

Yet the play theory is a natural and easy explanation, for pleasure is most easily understood as sensation, and sport seems to be the sphere in which physical pleasure is redeemed from mere sensual indulgence, and in which ethical qualities, although in a very limited sense, appear. On the general problem of hedonism in aesthetics, Bosanquet's conclusions are on the whole, soundly constructive.

"It seems to follow," he says, "that in some degree, after all has been said that can be said for the unity of body and mind, it will be necessary to rehabilitate the distinction between bodily or relatively partial, and spiritual or relatively total, satisfactions. A pleasure in which the bodily system as such is harmoniously excited, as in a game or sport at its best, must be fundamentally different from a far-reaching emotion in which the body is but secondarily aroused, as in reflection on the triumph of a moral or political cause. If it were possible that pleasure, in the direct and simple sense, could be achieved proportional to the participation of the body in any activity, and not to the range of objective harmony signified to the intelligence through its activity (e. g., through a certain group of judgments or perceptions), we should have a theory which would come near to fitting the facts of introspection and of ethical and aesthetic analysis. Pleasure would then be a concomitant of satisfaction, but not simply proportional to it."

Let us now consider briefly several art works which may serve to test the value of pleasure in explaining and providing a criterion of art, and illustrate some of the points already made.

Giorgione as a Proof of the Pleasure Principle

An example that might be cited by supporters of the pleasure principle is the *Virgin and Child with Saints,* by Giorgione, at Castelfranco, one of that master's most famous works. It represents the Madonna and Child seated on a high throne, with a landscape stretching out far behind, and on the left of the picture stands a knight in armor while on the right there is a monk. The artist who painted this canvas is one of the great innovators in painting. He died while still young, but through a series of works produced during his short career, he effected a deep change in European painting, because he gave a new turn to that medium in Venice and the development of his new direction, at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, profoundly modified painting everywhere.

He participated to the full in the luxurious pleasures of the Venetian Renaissance. "He was brought up in Venice," says Vasari, "and he ever found delight in amorous pursuits; so much was he enamored of the sound of the lute, and in his day he played and sang so divinely that he was often in request for musical parties and assemblages of noble birth." His character is consistent with the qualities of his painting, notable for its glowing, harmonious color, its delicious tones, and its almost musical atmosphere, a faintly melancholy revery, a romantic timelessness and poetic suggestion. The altar piece at Castelfranco must have been an early work, for its composition is relatively simple and it exhibits incipient characteristics which are more fully and definitely present in other works, both his own and those of his school.

The delight we find in the Castelfranco Madonna is not simply due to the rich, vibrant color or the selected models sympathetically glorified. The nobility of the figures is emphasized by a massive dignity in the spacing; the wide, generous landscape stretching beyond confirms the sentiment of the whole work. The buildings, trees, and sky are not shown in the manner of an architect's rendering, with harsh precision of detail and conscious mastery of the principles of perspective, but as parts of a whole, in complete accord with the serene and aristocratic splendor of the Madonna between the two sections of the landscape and the saints below.

When we compare this work with later masterpieces of Venetian painting we at once observe that the pleasure we experience in this work is unmistakably superior. Delight in appearance as such, pleasure in the glorious color of fine stuffs and of rich skies, the sheen of armor and the creamy softness of delicate skin, has not yet become ostentatious display of luxury and power.

The subject is, to be sure, religious, but its religious function does not dominate the artist and the observer. Instead of a supernatural being reaching down to earth and made manifest there, this work presents rather the way in which earthly beings and the physical world can be so transfigured through human effort that they seem to have attained divinity. It is not, therefore, the obvious stimulation of religious morality as such, nor the representation of dogma in visual form that chiefly moves us in this work. The gracious loveliness of Giorgione naturally appealed deeply to Walter Pater, and the intense enjoyment of the moment which Pater counselled finds adequate justification in the high pleasures to be experienced in the contemplation of this work of art.

Nothing is to be gained by the unique happiness that this great work of art affords, nothing to which we may look as an end to be achieved through it as a preliminary means. I may not know much about the scholarly and historical problems which Giorgione presents, I may have only vague and general notions about the Venetian Renaissance, but I have no doubt about the character of my experience while I gaze at this picture and I know that while I do so I am happy. It is even conceivable that certain changes occur in my nervous and physiological constitution by which the intensity of my experience might be measured and compared with that of others under similar circumstances or my own under different circumstances. It is not an intellectual or a moral judgment that I exercise in enjoying the Castelfranco Madonna, and yet the details of my state while enjoying this work of art are quite different from what they are when I step into a cool church out of the uncomfortable Italian sunlight. The coolness is felt with my face and hands at once, I find relief by breathing the damp air into my lungs. I refer the pleasure of coolness to the organs through which I experience that pleasure. The pleasure of Giorgione's work I refer not to any part of my body but to the picture itself. Thus, according to Santayana, beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing.

Titian as a Refutation of the Pleasure Principle

Let us compare this work, which seems to justify the thought that pleasure is the meaning of art, with another work of the same school, although of a later date, Titian's *Christ Crowned with Thorns,* in the Alte Pinakothek at Munich.

The color is deep and tragic, in accordance with the theme, but there is none of the aristocratic magnificence to be found in Giorgione's works. The composition is not symmetrically balanced and architecturally organized as in the Castelfranco picture. The figures of the soldiers who attack the patient, suffering Christ are not glorified human beings, but rather inferior to the average in their brutal ugliness. Instead of a calm repose we have here violent and passionate activity. There is no immediate and normal pleasure in the sight of a helpless, unoffending man assaulted by muscular jailors in a dark prison. It is true that the observer's pain is an imaginative sympathy; it may even be alleged that by ideally participating in the unmerited pains of the central figure, his own frustrations, his own ungoverned hesitations between pity and terror, are purified and sublimated. But that is a justification for the presence of evil in art, of what is wrong, because it contributes to a higher right in the scheme of things; of what is ugly in art because the aesthetic design and its results yield a result superior in beauty to the elements which themselves contribute to it, though ugly. To say that the evil and the ugly and the painful do not make the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant impossible is still far from saying that pleasure is the essence of the beauty in this or any beautiful picture.

For the average citizen, for the observer without the rich backgrounds of European literary culture, in which religious ideas play so large a part, it is quite probable that the picture by Titian might not be beautiful at all. He finds no pleasure either in the theme or its treatment, in the composition, color, design, or technique. For that observer, the picture is not beautiful because it does not please him. It is no refuge from this difficulty to claim that with proper education anybody could perceive the beauty of this work, for with deliberately conditioned reactions, if he were raised in an atmosphere either domestic or local where all Titian's works were approved simply because he did them, the observer could be taught to admire this work. He could similarly be taught, unless a very abnormal mind, to like anything. The most uncivilized savage could be conditioned to admire a work of Titian's if some calculated miracles were produced through influences attributed to it as a sacred ikon.

Nor is the difficulty lessened when it is asserted that eventually he to whom the picture now yields no pleasure might be changed so that he would join the community of capable judges in their admiration. There are even capable judges who dislike this phase of the master's work and detest the era of baroque intensiveness and exaggeration which it initiates.

A Kind of Art Selected at Random

Still another class of art works which might be cited in relation to pleasure as the meaning of art is to be found in such books as Prinzhorn's on the art of the insane and the criminal. We should hardly expect to find art in the asylum or prison; to find it is indeed accidental. Probably, however, the men and women who produced these objects found pleasure in making them, and abnormal psychology finds a most plausible defense for a Freudian theory of all art in the analysis of such invalids, discovering the reason for their pleasure in their activities. The psychoanalysts have accordingly been much occupied with extending the ideas derived from a study of the art of the insane to that of recognized masters. In many cases they indulge in an extension of the pleasure principle to make it coincident with awareness of the aggressive will, and self-conscious striving in general.

Some distinctive productions of recent art movements in particular are analyzed for similarities to the art of the insane. But the concept of insanity is even more in need of clarification than that of art before it can very profitably be discussed in connection with art. When any variation whatever from an unrealized average of mental balance and equilibrium is termed insanity, and every plastic activity is termed art, the terms are widened so far that a study of the relations is futile.

If the pleasure which they afford those who produced them, and the pleasure which they provide alienists who study them, were identical with their beauty, then the most significant and meritorious aesthetic objects would not be the works of either Giorgione or Titian. The works of greatest beauty would be the objects in which the abnormal fetichist finds delight.

Some works of art are pleasing, works intended to be art usually please somebody at some time, but not all works of art are always and everywhere pleasing. Aesthetic pleasure is not that which distinguishes art, for in that case it is art which identifies the particular pleasure. Pleasure, subjective or objective, is not in itself the sufficient or the essential meaning of art. Since the emotion involved in an experience of art is not its essence, can it be the manner or means of art which distinguish it from other classes of objects? Is imitation the meaning of art?

CHAPTER V

IS IMITATION THE MEANING OF ART?

The theory that art is important chiefly because of its moral value, and that beauty is subordinate to the good in life, is a far-reaching one and frequently applied. A second step in the popular rationalization of art is to assume that art is a species of pleasure. The third stage of customary discussion is reached when it is asked, How is art related to practical and spiritual reality? The usual answer is, through imitation. Logic does not demand that this claim be combined with the ethical and hedonist positions, but in the history of ideas the three have gone together.

The principle of imitation finds support in so many different directions, and solves so many problems as it is variously interpreted and applied, that it is easily the most important of all explanations of art. It has prevailed for several thousand years. It was the first abstract statement accounting for art, and it has persisted in spite of all rivals and competitors.

Imitation affords solutions to many difficult questions which art presents. It tells us, for example, how the artistic process is related to nature and to the artistic product. It finds perhaps its clearest justification in sculpture. The standing figure of an athlete was not created by a miracle, nor does the stone tend, of its own nature, to assume a human form. It is the creation of an individual, and the relation of this product of his skill to any given athlete or to an ideal one is roughly that of a copy. Greek sculpture is possibly the supreme achievement of Greek art, and the most typical. In the small city-state the process of sculpture and the sculptor's trade were very familiar, Socrates himself was originally a sculptor, and the illustration of the principle in sculpture made the theory of imitation particularly convincing to the Greeks. It was already established as the popular explanation before it was adopted by Plato and embodied by Aristotle in a document which, since the Renaissance, has been the fertile source of modern aesthetics and theory of art.

Aristotle's Poetics

The *Poetics* is concerned primarily with drama, and the theatre represents or imitates men in action. Aristotle finds the historical and psychological origin of drama in the instincts of mimicry and rhythm; the progress of Attic drama up to the philosopher's own time is outlined. Tragedy he analyzes as the most significant type of literary art, and defines it in accordance with the principle of imitation.

The theory that art is imitation was the result of the earliest serious thinking about art, but we should remember that Greek thought in the classical period is free from acknowledged dualism such as permeates all European thought since the Christian era. Objects of art were not considered different in kind from other objects known through the senses, their reality was not radically to be distinguished from that of other familiar things, and this was natural to the classical Greeks, for fine art was not an exotic or unusual thing in the Athens of Plato and Aristotle. Because of an effective freedom from dualism, gaining thereby a profound directness, symbolism in the religious sense played no conspicuous part. By the serious philosophers fanciful allegory was discouraged as well as allegorical interpretations. This situation made it all the more natural for the imitation theory, variously understood, to be accepted as a sufficient explanation.

The limitations of the principle, in the sense of mere copying, have often been analyzed. Hegel pointed out that imitation is a repetition of what is already better presented by nature itself, for the imitation offered by art is both superfluous and imperfect. Artistic imitation can be amusing, for example, in the art of the ventriloquist, but not seriously beautiful, and Plato also expressed contempt for such tricksters. Hegel points out that some arts are not imitative in this naturalistic way; architecture, music, and poetry, do not confine themselves to description or to obvious reproduction of forms independently occurring in nature. He also finds imitation lacking, because he feels that if we accept it, the objective reality of beauty disappears, it is reduced to simple relativity of taste.

Incapacity of Art to Duplicate Nature Illustrated by Landscape

But the capacity of any art to copy natural appearance is so limited that art, considered to be imitation and nothing more, is ultimately of little significance. The example of landscape painting easily makes this lack of capacity plain. When we paint from nature out of doors, in full sunlight and in the open air, how far can we successfully copy it? The limitations are soon found to be extensive and insuperable. Beyond the fact that a painting presents in two planes what occurs in three, there are other difficulties. In the natural scene, even under an overcast sky, there is a continual change, gradual or spasmodic, in the intensity and direction of the light; with wider horizons and panoramic views these changes proceed at different rates in different parts of the same scene.

There is no frame or limiting line to the natural scene. Yet even the mathematical relation of a plane cutting the cone of vision, from the eye to the scene itself, is usually neglected. The canvas is not often treated as a window-pane enclosed by a frame so that the basic assumption of elementary perspective is rarely employed. It has also often been remarked that the range of values offered by pigments is but a fraction of the range which occurs in nature, and attempts to contract the range of natural values occurring in a given scene within the range of available pigments by some system of proportionate reduction of areas or intensities, is only too apt to produce a conspicuously artifical result.

Over and above this, the objects in nature will not hold still; it takes a fast camera to catch the fleeting gestures of natural beauty; and the most naturalistic painter is not as quick as a camera. In addition to the movements and unstable forms of the clouds, the motion of foliage is another basic difficulty of the landscape painter, and the problems of luminosity and color intensity found in the visual facts of the leaves on trees are also profoundly disturbing to the conscientious craftsman who intends only to render the objective facts of vision. Foliage is practically all of the same hue, but the shades and values vary in such a way that we can see the tree consists of a very large number of individual leaves.

The conditions of illumination still further complicate the situation. We have first of all the prevailing hue, of which we are aware when there is something to prevent the light from shining through the leaf lying at an angle oblique to the eye. There may be found, however, in a certain number of leaves, an effect like that of a stained-glass window, with the powerful light streaming right through the translucent body of the leaf, and this is an intensity which pigments cannot reproduce. Finally, there may be some leaves which lie at an angle such that the membrane on the surface of the leaf acts as a mirror and reflects the light directly from the sun into the eyes. All these optical conditions make genuine reproduction of nature in painting quite impossible.

Added to these difficulties, there is the equally objective difficulty that the hands and eyes of artists differ among themselves, and ten artists, as nearly as possible conditioned precisely alike from birth, who attempt to reproduce the same scene at the same time and place, will show us ten quite different records of visual fact in their results. Ten orphan artists from the same asylum would provide significant material for the behaviorist.

The situation presented by the artist is a strong piece of evidence for the belief that truth is also a value, for none of the artists, as a rule, is a deliberate liar or falsifier. Each represents what most profoundly interests him as real in what he sees. Afterwards he views his result as, within justifiable limitations, representing the truth of what existed objectively in nature. To the artist and observers like-minded with him, the painting afterwards affords the joys of recognition; they see again what they have already seen and are aware of a vivid intensification of what they remember. The Greeks were especially sensitive to the pleasures of recognition; it was a dramatic device to which they attached a value that we today, under existing conditions of society, do not feel in equal degree. But instead of being disturbed by the differences between the object in nature and the record of observation in the art work, they and we are pleased with the recognition and justification of our memories together with an admiration for the skill of the artist. To be deceived by a perfect imitation, on the other hand, by a man who looks convincingly like a clothing model in a shop-window, or by a wax-figure looking like a living man, under conditions which make the deception effective, is either a shocking surprise or a source of superficial amusement.

The Photograph an Inadequate Illustration of Truth to Nature

Among opponents of the imitation theory today the usual illustrative analogy is the photograph, and even now it is currently assumed that photographs, since they are the result of a purely physical process, do not lie. The photograph is supposed to fulfill the aims and objectives of the artist or critic who holds the theory of imitation. The distortions and alterations of visual facts found in such pictures, are, however, easily noted when our attention is directed to them. Cameras, moreover, do not work of their own accord, but are instruments guided by human wills for human purposes. It is therefore possible to publish in newspapers photographs of rival presidential candidates, in which the interests of the publisher are clearly exhibited. Without retouching or other physical alteration of the photographic plate or the print made from it, one may portray the first candidate in an informal and unfavorable posture, with a look of abstraction which makes him look like a moron in pain, while the other shows a cheerful, manly, and intelligent citizen to whom the nation's destinies may well be entrusted.

While it is not feasible here to examine the relations of photography to art on the one hand and to the physical reality on the other, it may be said definitely that the photograph is not a satisfactory illustration of truthful rendition of natural objective fact. The mirror is much more adequate.

The odium attached by Plato in the *Sophist* to works of art also belongs to the mirror. They may both be morally misleading. The work of art, he charges, offers unreliable and deceptive images which minimize the great and aggrandize the small, leading us to erroneous judgments of moral actualities. Strachey's endeavors may mislead in one direction, as Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware* may in another. The image in the mirror may incline Napoleon's valet to see his master as actually a conceited, vulgar, pudgy little Corsican, and to view himself as really a superior, refined soul genuinely deserving the eminence unworthily achieved by Napoleon.

Primitive Art not Intended Merely to Copy

Returning to primitive art, to find a type of aesthetic object far removed from any connection with the camera, it may be said that while such carving, sculpture, and painting show surprising keenness of observation in certain particulars, mere copying or perpetuation of the appearance of objects does not seem to have been the aim of the aboriginal artists. The phenomena are more easily explained by analogy with existing art products of men living in a state of savage culture, where such images are created for the sake of their supernatural powers. In them we today see vivid and moving expressions of the early artists' plastic, creative powers, but to those same artists and to their contemporaries, they were significant as magic and ritual instruments. Many of the paintings were so placed that they could not be seen and admired in those dim ages, but as in offerings at religious shrines in the Middle Ages and even now, they were precious and potent things which did not need to be seen closely and clearly, their mere known presence was all that was desired. That the primitive artists did not produce for the sake of representation as such, is also shown by the fact that they did not copy indifferent objects, landscapes, and other things which we today represent, but only such things as had a direct and immediate importance in their precarious lives.

Theory of Imitation as Proof of Artificiality

A photograph of a portrait bust together with the person portrayed often arouses interest in newspaper readers who compare the original with the copy, on the basis of accuracy, but the artificiality of the art product is often also a source of amusement. Fashionable and flattering portraits, especially, turn back the calendar and bestow grace of proportion and pose never realized in the subject. Here, as in caricatures and humorous drawings, the contrast between the ideal, as a vapid and generalized artifice, and the concrete actuality as something natural and real, is a stimulus to mirth. The outmoded costumes and preferred types of physical loveliness enjoyed by one generation, but unfailingly rejected by that immediately succeeding, usually have the effect of being slightly ridiculous, pretending to be something which they were not. For the generation which produced them, such representations were praiseworthy efforts to attain an ideal actually unrealized, but in the next generation fashionable portraits are artificial pretensions, condemned by the contrast between what actually is and what is represented in the art of the previous decade. The art of one's own day seems again to be justified by its aims at a superior truthfulness.

A contemptuous attitude toward the art of the elders usually discovers a superficial warrant for the application of the principle of imitation. It is always easy to apply the test of naturalism and show that the earlier generation did not succeed in copying the object accurately as it is now presented to our view. It is common, also, among critics, to take still another step, as Walter Pach has done in his *Ananias,* and condemn outmoded artists for committing a moral fault in their failure to imitate reality as we, with more enlightened vision, now see it.

Persistence of Naïve Version of Imitation

It is significant that while the general theory of imitation, naïvely interpreted, has been largely abandoned in favor of more psychological doctrines, it now constitutes a major principle of that borderland or disputed territory of science known as social psychology. But the principle does not persist solely in psychological and sociological treatises. We find imitation still popular and thriving on a large scale. The Greek legend of trees or flowers so lifelike that they deceived the birds of the air, naturally continued through the Renaissance, and it was attached to a large canvas by Girolamo dai Libri now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Prominent in this picture is a large decorative tree with flatly painted leaves rising behind the central figures and spreading out in the upper portion of the picture space. The painted tree is ornamental and decorative in a high degree, and to our present way of thinking it is less realistic than many a wall-paper design. But the picture evidently appealed to the artist's contemporaries as a triumph of imitation, since the same legend of the birds' deception by the painted foliage was adopted for this picture also. When the picture was recently reproduced in a colored supplement of the *New York World,* the newspaper perpetuated the naïve tale by remarking: "The painting won great fame in its original home through the story, well authenticated, that birds flying into the church tried to light on the tree which occupies the upper part of the canvas."

In teaching drawing and painting and in treatises written by some artists on their own craft, the theory of imitation often survives in rather crude form. Accuracy and truthfulness to the object is in most conventional art schools insisted upon as the primary obligation of the art student, meaning, as a matter of fact, agreement with the instructor's vision, and it is the test applied by the beginner's inartistic relatives and friends. Just how the young art student is to be accurate in his reproduction of line, chiaroscuro, and color is something his teachers have not yet been able to explain, for in their own work they must necessarily establish an order of selection among these three elements, and not all can be had equally at the same time in the same picture. Nor do the teachers who insist on accuracy tell the art student how he is to paint a picture in two dimensions, as it can appear only to a one-eyed man, and yet have it true to what a normal two-eyed man always sees.

The Relation of Imitation to Naturalism

An angle from which the principle of imitation is frequently envisaged concerns the problem of naturalism in art. The naturalistic artist is apt to defend his work on the ground that what he does after all only imitates nature faithfully, he cannot conscientiously do anything other or better than imitate what is. Truthfulness to the actual individual is both more vividly impressive and superior in ethical value. Through the representative function of art our attention is more keenly fixed upon the moral relations of the world in which we exist. That they imitate externals and what is unpleasant or instrinsically ugly, that they dwell needlessly on suffering and pain, is the Puritanical or philistine comment on such art.

A prime difficulty which confronts naturalistic interpreters of the theory of imitation is the fact that the delights of nature have but a weak rival in art. This observation has been expressed in many ways. The Spartans who were visited by a man professing to be able to imitate the nightingale perfectly replied that they had rather hear a nightingale. Ruskin asserted that a beautiful flesh and blood English girl would distract any man from a Greek statue. A cartoonist has shown us a singer at an afternoon concert deserted by the audience for the more direct delights of the cocktail shakers.

Because crude naturalism is an insufficient meaning of art, it does not follow that reproduction of external appearance may in itself not be counted an artistic merit. Greek sculptors themselves strove for truthfulness in the representation of details like hair, and the actions or attitudes of the body, as we learn from Pliny. The intense effort to attain truthfulness to natural effects, approved by Ruskin, was a life-work for Constable and Monet.

But even so, it is also hard to say why the phenomena of which we are aware through sight and hearing are those on which art depends. Why are perfumer's works inferior to those of the sculptor? Socrates found a solution for this situation, when he declared that the essence of beauty is really its usefulness, after all, so that beauty is not mere appearance or seeming. The particular usefulness found in beauty is a latent power or strength, for the capacity perceived in strength, he says, is always beautiful, while weakness is ugly. The potency of a beautiful thing is realized when it is directed to a good end. Thus the beautiful is a cause of that which is good. This is an example of Socrates' own pragmatism, which rises above the ordinary empirical level by observing that ideas, values, and qualities are to be efficiently realized in the life of action. This view contains the germs of several much later explanations.

Imitation and Tradition

Another question, around which much discussion has always centered, is the relation of tradition to artistic excellence. One of the popular synonyms for the classical is the traditional. To imitate what is excellent is to adhere to the traditional, rather than to run the risks of irrational eccentricity. If the beautiful, the aim of art, has already been realized in recognized achievements, to repeat the accepted patterns is a sure way to continue to realize beauty in works of art.

We observe, however, as did the ancients themselves, that there is decided difference among the various great sculptors of classical Greece and their schools. Aristotle not only judged the merits of the great tragic poets but noted their contributions to the technique and practice of the Attic stage. He found himself in a situation where he could analyze Attic tragedy as a perfected type for philosophical study, while he probably saw, and correctly, that such was not the case with comedy. This may have been one of the reasons why he appears to have neglected it in the *Poetics*.

But vivid appreciation of orderly change in human affairs, even in man's understanding of what is real in himself and the world about him, is an especially modern development; both the concepts of progress and of historical evolution are essentially characteristic of our present world. Such an expectation, observing development as a matter of fact, finds it hard to identify excellence with the faithfully traditional. On the other hand, absolute independence and originality, is, whether in artistic creation or in the mere communication of our thought through spoken words, an impossibility and an illusion. In any case, whether tradition is an excuse for lack of originality, or a conscious participation in a general movement common to most of one's contemporaries, the real problem does not lie in the question whether the way to excellence in art is to be found in imitating achieved masterpieces, or in defying convention and attempting something unique and original.

A more practical aspect of the principle of imitation, to be seen in the experience of the artist, is its effect upon his own endeavors. The work of art, the merit of which is thoroughly established and respected by succeeding generations, is that which is least susceptible to doubt, to the charge of subjective illusion, and it most worthily therefore demands imitation. The artist finds, however, that if he is, so to speak, inspired by the beauty of an earlier work, his own product will in form hardly resemble the precedent that stimulates him. But if he adheres to that shape or pattern, he is apt to discover his own work is cold and empty, lacking the compelling spirit of the earlier artist and his time, as well as the vital energy of those who most adequately respond to contemporary ideals. Thus the imitation of the classics is an impracticable and barren program, while the exact form and substance of what is genuinely significant in one's own time is most difficult to determine with certainty. A deliberate intention to imitate existing art objects is, obviously, on the part of the artist, not a key to genuine success but often an additional impediment to it. Merely to reproduce, to copy, what has been done, or is being done, is for the artist an unsatisfactory program.

Imitation and Representation

The word the Greeks used for imitation is *mimesis,* which is more adequately translated by representation than by imitation, according to some critics who wish to avoid the implication in the word imitation that mere mechanical copying is meant or that the art product is a spurious and inferior substitute for the thing imitated. Such a translation does something to defend the dignity of the philosopher, but it does not alter the fact that the implications which moderns dislike in the word were felt by Plato and other Greeks to be a natural consequence of a correct principle. Aristotle sublimated a popular conception and developed it on the philosophical plane, but he did not invent a new word or so radically re-define the accepted word that it entirely lost its ordinary significance. We see, however, that Aristotle himself did not limit his conception to the duplication of reality afforded by plaster casts, because he carried on from Plato the idea that music is the most imitative art.

But the controversy over representation is the most familiar present form in which the old principle is revived. The implication usually is, on the part of the conservatives, that the business of art is to imitate judiciously the appearances presented by external nature, as if the human eye and the brain behind it have always seen exactly the same way, because so far as we know the structure and function of the human eye have not changed fundamentally since the cave men drew beasts on the walls of the cavern at Altamira. Radicals, however, are apt to declare that exact imitation is impossible in the first place, that art's business is to do something more and better, and it is more effectively realized by entirely abandoning any attempt at duplication of things seen.

The principal movements of the nineteenth century—neoclassicism, romanticism, naturalism, impressionism, cubism, and expressionism—succeeded each other and were in turn attacked and defended by artists and critics. As the characteristics of each separate movement became familiar and widely accepted, it altered from the radical to the conservative point of view. The neoclassicists were radical innovators against academic rococo, but they became conservative upholders of tradition against the romanticists. Today impressionism is taught in some places as the only sound method of painting, the only one which is true to the facts of light and the human eye, as opposed to the vagaries of more recent movements. But it is strange to see how often the academic compromise between classicism and romanticism used the very same arguments against impressionism which impressionism now uses against the latest heresies.

In recent years the word design has, with a considerable shift in its original meaning, been used to denote the contrary of representation. Thus Ralph M. Pearson declares: "Representation in art means copying, imitating, or mirroring in a work, objects or facts, as they actually appear in nature or human life. It implies concern with detail—the slight, momentary, superficial aspect of things, such as the accidental shadows which reveal form at a particular moment in a particular light." He sums up his discussion as follows: "Because it is particular instead of universal, and because the side-attractions which it calls to its banners have no blood-relationship to art, the sum total of the contribution which representation in pictures makes to the observer, is entertainment and information in various matters outside of art, and a partial education in vision. It is the general type of work which is distinguished by the term romanticism, and belongs to the romantic school of art." He promises in his next chapter to discuss what is good in pictures, and that is classic art.

The word classic is used by such writers as Pearson, Pach, and Wilenski to create a fundamental confusion that is unfair to modern art, and their adoption of the term classic chiefly indicates the art which they approve, in rebelling against conventional work. Yet they also manipulate the dialectic weapons flourished by romanticism when it staged its own rebellion. Above all, it is interesting to see that their positive concept of what is classic in art was unknown to the thinkers of the classical moment in ancient civilization. It combines most of the elements from Plato and Aristotle which entered into our culture through revived Neoplatonism. In Pearson's discussion design is identified with the classical, although he does not make this relation, or a great many other points to which he attaches fervid importance, clear in his enthusiastic dogmatising.

In contrast with the incoherence of Pearson we find that the conventional neoclassic doctrine, purified and polished by an inheritor of the Puritan tradition, is clearly expressed by Brownell in his *Standards,* when he argues against current or recent movements in a chapter on Modern Art. Both he and Babbitt have a literary vision of Greek art which is unknown to archaeologists, so that these critics fail to appreciate classical art as a historical phenomenon, just as most of the radicals fail to realize the historical origin of the doctrines which they teach in praising their own artistic productions.

A much-quoted paradox devised by Oscar Wilde asserts that nature always imitates art. There are many illustrations of this claim. The ancients appear to have had no idea of landscape gardening, either formal or in the English manner, and it is characteristic that Kames, Kant and other modern philosophers classified landscape gardening as an independent art for the first time. In deliberate arrangements of the landscape the artist does indeed impose a design even upon the nature out of doors. With the gradual conquest of the forces and materials of physical nature, so that it contributes to his purposes rather than thwarting them continually and unexpectedly, man is altering the whole appearance of the external world; it more and more becomes what he desires it to be.

On a less philosophical plane we see that not only do styles in women's dress change rapidly and inevitably, but that preferences for different possibilities in the human figure itself change, and women succeed surprisingly in modeling their forms in accordance with changing fashion rather than conforming to biological types. But a very interesting point is that in this situation, too, nature seems to imitate art rather than contrariwise, for dress does not conform to the supposedly fixed biological types prevailing in different territories. In civilized countries today one mode, originated in Paris, prevails throughout the world, and figures must conform to the mode, not the mode to figures. It is equally interesting to observe that, according to a manufacturer of display fixtures for shop windows, his models do not imitate the proportions and lines of the shoppers who gaze at them but they embody and anticipate the proportions and lines suitable for fashionable dress. The human figure imitates, in the sense of copying the appearance of the models provided in advance by those whose business in life it is to design figures acceptable as the fashion.

Analogies to Processes of Art in Plato and Aristotle

It is extraordinarily significant that there is an analogy to some aspect of the situation presented by a work of art in fundamental assumptions of both Plato and Aristotle. For Plato the relation between the object and the idea has a broad parallel in that between the artist's mental image and the art work. Even if the artist's vision is clear and precise, complete in every detail, before he begins to execute his conception in some medium through his practiced skill, the work of art never comes out quite as he pre-visioned it. The accidents of the material, the other physical conditions of the time and place, the manual habits of the artist, the necessary adjustments of various parts of the work to one another as the work progresses, all make the result differ more or less from the artist's intention. Thus the idea, according to Plato, is never completely realized in anything, and any material object is only an imperfect copy of the eternal idea. Painting, particularly, illustrates this point.

In Aristotle there is the fundamental assumption of a relation between matter and form or the teleological actuality. This view was expressed in scholasticism as the relation between accident and substance. The purpose or goal of a thing, according to Aristotle, is the end of its movement or nature, the term of its process. The real character and quality of a thing are to be found in the attainment of its end, what it is when its development is completed in the progress from matter or potential existence to form or complete actuality. In comparison with Plato, who was himself a poet, and impressed with the experience of the painter in creating an art work, Aristotle is more aware of what the layman or external observer notes. For him the art work is essentially a likeness, not a symbol. He finds in imitation, as the artistic process, an explanation of the meaning of art.

His theory is supported by the relation between the head of a living man and the sculptured portrait bust. While the matter or substance is different, the form is remarkably similar. The matter seems to be of much less importance than the form, which is something imposed on material. But under the hand of a skilled artist, the material gradually assumes a fore-ordained and preconceived shape. Thus much of the metaphysics of both Plato and Aristotle is made convincing by an underlying analogy to an aspect of the situation created by an object of art. Attacks upon them are most effectively based upon some other analogy, or by developing the defects in the analogy due to the fact that a similarity is not an identity, and exaggerating these differences until they destroy even the similarity.

Plato's Theory of Imitation

From Plato's references to beauty we find that he identifies it variously with qualities characteristic almost exclusively of formal beauty, which we might expect from the period when he lived. Thus he makes the beautiful equivalent to what is purposeful or directed to an end; to proportion and symmetry; to simplicity, purity, and harmony. However, in the *Republic* he also defines it as spiritual, identical with the good. In the *Symposium,* we are told how the soul can pass beyond corporeal and spiritual beauty to the idea of absolute beauty. In the *Phaedrus* Plato discusses the relation of the good, the true, and the beautiful to the ideal and to one another.

On the other hand, Plato does not seem to have drawn a clear distinction between fine and useful arts. He found an educative value in certain forms of art, and he esteemed the art of the statesman the highest of all. He declared in the *Laws* that pleasure is not the standard of excellence in art, but something which accompanies it. In the *Gorgias* he asserted that pleasure should be pursued for the sake of what is good, and not for the sake of pleasure, and this afforded a hint for the Epicureans, but he also taught that the arts which serve pleasure only are flatterers and deceivers. Love, including the love of beauty, is what creates poets and artists, but it is one of the four kinds of madness.

Because Plato's theory of ideas is the metaphysical ground for his rejection of art, but nevertheless suggested a vindication of art to Aristotle and Plotinus, we should recall the various aspects of this doctrine in what Plato wrote. In his earlier dialogues the idea is the common appearance and type of being which is subsumed in a concept. The contents of the concept are expressed by a word and from this purely logical meaning grew one that is ontological or metaphysical. The idea is hypostatized, treated as a real thing, raised to the rank of substance; it is made the cause of the individual objects which are included in the concept and owe their being to it. The idea now exists independently and is self-sufficient. Instead of a conceptual unity under which the many are comprehended, the idea becomes an objectively real unity, which confers occasionally upon the many that which constitutes their reality. In the *Republic* we find that the ideas' existence is derived from the highest idea of all, the idea of the highest good which is the source of all being and existence, just as the sun is in our physical world. In the final dialogues the ideas become divine.

As concepts, there are ideas of all the many things which are comprised in them, such as those of tables and beds. As themselves things, the ideas exist without time and place, free from qualification and relativity, beyond material existence. The ideas are the eternal and true beings, contrasted with the things of sense which are always flowing and changing, hesitating between being and not being. This led to the view that the ideas had an existence separate from individual objects.

Plato, however, did not isolate the ideas from individual things which correspond to them, and he expressed the relation between them in several ways. Sometimes he described it as a sharing or participation of individual things in the ideas, or even as the presence of the ideas in the several things. Again, he discussed the idea as the original model, the individual things as the copies or imitations. Both views of the union of the idea and things are presented alternately or combined, so that a development from one to the other is not easily established.

That words and concepts could correspond rather precisely to the reality of the ideas was a matter on which Plato seemed to have little doubt, but that the artist's creations do not equally correspond to the things which he imitates, he was convinced as a matter of observation. He was thus led, by his intellectual prejudices and the political constitution under which he lived, to prefer the dialectician as the man to exhibit the world of ideas rather than the artist. The limitations of his theory of art and his final adverse judgment are, then, due to a defect in his theory of knowledge, for he adopted the theory of imitation in his epistemology, and having exhausted its applicability there, he could not approve of art for similar reasons, where the evidence obviously proved its inadequacy, without undermining his whole philosophical structure.

An element in Plato's thought, which is not so much stressed as his metaphysical theory of the ideas, is the place given to mathematics as that which stands between the idea and individual things. It is like the ideas in its eternity and permanence, but is different from them in that every mathematical fact is completely repeated innumerable times, while the ideas are sometimes unique. According to Aristotle, at a later stage Plato compared ideas with numbers, and this is consistent with the general emphasis on mathematics in his final thought, a stronger inclination toward Pythagorean principles.

Idealism in Ethics as the Result of Aesthetic Value in Conduct

An interesting problem is presented by the situation: How did idealism come to have its ordinary present meaning, an aesthetic value attached to or determining ethics?

It is probably the change in the theory of imitation from a philosophical theory to a pedagogic law which rendered it objectionable to a later and more romantic generation. But even in classical antiquity there are indications that the Platonic ideas themselves were used as a means of combating the ban under which Plato had placed art. Cicero, for example, in discussing the perfect speaker, never met in experience but imagined in the spirit, compares him with the artistic image not seen with the physical eyes, but existing as a mental picture within the artist's spirit. The situation of the Athenian state in Plato's age, the character of the Greek state in general, an attachment to the beauty of abstract ideas so intense that it jealously excluded the sensible symbols through which it is most convincingly known to human beings, and a destructive insistence on the logical implications of his metaphysical doctrine, prevented Plato from finding in his own principles that application which has been most favored in other centuries.

In the fifth book of the *Republic* we are told that few of us are able to attain the vision of absolute beauty. Unless they have had that vision, even those who are familiar with beautiful things are relatively blind or walk in their sleep, compared with those who have. The knowledge attained through vision is that all sensible phenomena are mere shadows of a higher reality; to be able to distinguish between permanent and transient beauty is the reward of such knowledge. Plato, however, did not use the artist as his type of the man who thus perceives, but preferred the dialectician.

It was during the sixteenth century that cultivated men habitually instanced the artist rather than the dialectician. Instead of a metaphysical substance remote from man, the idea, according to the analogy offered by the artist, is an image or thought in the spirit of man himself. Such a view is expressed by Melanchthon, and was present as well in St. Thomas Aquinas. When this shift in the basic analogy was made, the decisive step had been taken whereby idealism meant aesthetic value, even in ethical matters. It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that the sphere of aesthetics could be definitely separated from that of metaphysics or ethics.

To the independence and disturbing originality of the Greek artists, Plato preferred the legally established norms of Egyptian art, where, the appropriate forms of the gods having once for all been decided, their works of art were always the same, unchanged for ten thousand years. According to an interesting passage in a Byzantine writer, Phidias observed that things appear to decrease in size at a great height, and he therefore gave his statue of Athena proportions which were objectively untrue, but which appeared to be true, for they corrected the optical changes due to distance from the observer on the ground level, and he gained a victory over his rival in that fashion. Perhaps it was with this very instance in mind that Plato explicitly condemned perspective changes in art, as giving not the beauty of genuine objective symmetry, but merely what seems to be beautifully symmetrical and is not.

The vital elements of Plato's theory and his idealism have been rescued for the benefit of cultured ages ever since in spite of his epistemological error; and his preference for formal art, with his dominating interest in political science, can readily be accounted for. In the first place, his career and contributions to the foundations of western thought came not at a primitive stage of Greek culture but near the end of the classical period properly so called. A highly organized and self-conscious culture had been achieved in close relation to an extremely unified social and political system. To maintain the integrity of the superior Greek state and its citizens against the relatively chaotic and unformed barbarian hordes, never very far off, was a source of continual anxiety. Within the state, a superficial relativity in intellectual effort and a cynical opportunism, prevailing in Plato's day, were additional sources of danger, and those are not phenomena of a pioneer culture. Plato was not able to eliminate dangers external and internal, but he could point out that the current search for knowledge was lacking in resolute courage, he could show that consciousness of duty had to be cultivated, and he indicated the path along which men could be saved from the catastrophes of both decadence and barbarism.

Aristotle's View of Imitation

The distinction between fine and useful art is due to Aristotle, although he likewise does not present a complete theory of art. It is particularly true of the useful arts that in them art imitates nature, for they follow the methods of nature and supplement its deficiencies, adapting the means to a preconceived end better than the process of nature itself unaided. Thus the arts of the physician and of the cook supplement the capacity of nature, the physician by facilitating and guiding the natural tendency to regain physiological equilibrium and to heal wounds, the cook by adding to the pleasant taste of food and making it more digestible. The useful arts assist natural processes by imitating them and their results for our vital purposes. The fine arts, however, according to Aristotle, imitate nature not merely by symbolizing its emotional effects upon us, but by completing likenesses which embody and communicate the universal embodied in the particular.

Neither Aristotle nor the European Renaissance were satisfied with the poetic vagueness of the discussion of beauty found in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus,* and it must be acknowledged that Plato himself had intellectual and ethical beauty in mind and not primarily the beauty of art. The Renaissance was again characterized by a rationalistic temper, to be seen clearly in the critical literature of the sixteenth century in Italy. This was not altogether new, for the prolonged and intense effort of scholasticism was also devoted to thorough-going analysis and classification, and viewed from this aspect it may be considered in its final results a sublime structure of common sense. In many ways the dogmatic temper of Italian Renaissance criticism, afterwards hardened into the so-called classical school in France, is the projection of scholastic methods of analysis and classification into a new field, not exploited by theology or philosophy, after the Council of Trent. It is true, of course, that there was a rebellion against sacerdotalism and the excessive elaboration of scholastic thought, but anti-authoritarian movements and a return to primitive simplicity are not necessarily, not even habitually, the exclusive result of rationalism.

In the *Poetics,* the revival of learning, humanism, and the new hope in art found a reply to the attacks of both Plato and the Middle Ages. Scholastic energy, diverted from the study of other works of Aristotle, found new opportunities in the recently recovered document. A great flood of commentaries, translations, and treatises based on it began at that time and has not yet ceased. The Italian works of the sixteenth century later affected French writers of drama as well as scholars; the surviving volumes studied by Racine and Corneille show a close attention to classical theory as expounded by Italian efforts to systematize and codify Aristotle. From one point of view this interest represents a reaction against the spineless and amorphous literature of the late Middle Ages, but an enthusiasm for form and unity as a necessary condition of a great literature, which should rival that of antiquity, was extended to an imitation, not of classical emphasis on form in general, but of the specific Roman forms in particular. The classifications, furthermore, which Aristotle set up as a result of his analysis of existing dramatic forms, were adopted as binding laws which, if faithfully followed, guaranteed success, and if neglected produced failure.

In our present enthusiasm for the significance of the *Poetics* and our recognition of its value to criticism, we must not forget that in antiquity the influence of the treatise was very slight, there are few certain references to it, or repetitions of its special technical terminology. In Rome, where the Aristotelian philosophy enjoyed devoted study, there is no trace of the *Poetics* independently of the philosopher's other works, in such great critics and writers as Cicero, Horace, or Quintilian. The transmission of the work is due to the protection of Orientals, and until its recovery in the sixteenth century, when Aristotle's influence increased in criticism, as it waned in theology and philosophy, the *Poetics* might almost not have existed.

The Aristotelian understanding of the principle of imitation, exhibited in the comparison of history and poetry, differs widely from the neoclassic and from literary impressionism. As Irving Babbitt declares: "A certain type of seventeenth century critic attempted to establish a standard that was entirely outside the individual. The impressionist has gone to the opposite extreme and set up a standard that is entirely within the individual. The problem is to find some middle ground between Procrustes and Proteus; and this right mean would seem to lie in a standard that is in the individual and yet is felt by him to transcend his personal self and lay hold of that part of his nature that he possesses in common with other men."

The universal which is intuitively perceived through the work of art is not such because of its quantitative characteristics; if it were, it should be termed the average rather than the universal. A portrait is not beautiful because it is a composite synthesis of the features of a number of different people. Aristotle, to be sure, says of the universal that it is what "can be predicated of more than one," but he says that its value consists in that it "reveals casual connections." In the *Poetics,* his discussion of plot, immediately preceding the passage in which he raises the question of universality, implies an interpretation of unity as that which excludes the accidental; it is an inevitability, a necessity, an imaginative coherence and consistency, and the chief mark of the presence of a genuine universal.

Such an elevated interpretation and extension of the doctrine of imitation was, however, rare. To judge from Greek comment on actual works of art, it was not the aspect of the principle which had a wide appeal. Perhaps it was the very idealism of this view which prevented the *Poetics* from enjoying much influence in antiquity, and it was not until the ground had been prepared by revived Neoplatonism that the Renaissance accorded a welcome to Aristotle's fundamental treatise.

The history of modern art criticism might be profitably studied as an analysis of the various elements in the *Poetics* which have been stressed in different historical periods. The so-called classical era in France is one in which the rationalistic phase of Aristotle rather than imaginative insight is developed. On the whole, it seems to be true, that an appreciation of the rôle of the imagination in imitation is an aspect of the matter hinted at in Aristotle, and a natural, indeed an inevitable corollary of his justification of poetry, but it is first insisted upon by the Neoplatonists.

This, it will be seen, is far from the familiar test of accuracy applied to an artist's work. Truthfulness of imitation is ordinarily interpreted as accuracy, if not in copying, at least in representation. Such an application of the principle is precisely the opposite of the basis on which Aristotle held poetry in higher esteem than history.

It was the suggestion of Aristotle handed on to the romantic school that produced such views as that of Schopenhauer, who borrowed language from scholastic philosophy in saying that music gives us *universalia ante rem,* an insight into general even before our apprehension of individual truth. Such a view, also finding support in Plato's *Phaedrus,* helps to diminish the separation between the beauty of representative and decorative or formal art, on the one hand, and between art and nature on the other. The test of accuracy then yields to a higher test of truthfulness, of genuine apprehension and expression of something spiritually discerned.

Neoclassic Understanding of Imitation

Those who interpret the doctrine of imitation as referring to generalized or universal truth in the neoclassic, literal-minded fashion are also confronted with impressive obstacles. This interpretation is reflected in the belief expressed by Dr. Johnson and other neoclassic critics, that only accurate representations of our common or general human nature can afford enduring and widespread satisfaction. The principle, carried to an extreme, is simply that of personification and allegory, too often resulting in hollow abstractions, where moralistic observations gain the consistency of rhetorical figures instead of achieving the unity of credible personalities.

If, indeed, general types or attributes of human character are to be represented on the stage, ruthless logic would demand that we should have not a soldier of any particular time or nationality but a soldier who would isolate those qualities common to all soldiers, and thus we attain the inhuman clear-cut types found in popular melodrama as well as in much of the older popular comedy. Yet the soldier and the lawyer are persistent types at the same time that they are special cases of humanity, so that neither exclusively represents humanity in itself. And even if by a process of selection and rejection we could arrive at a figure which would be a composite of all humanity, we should still fail to include all of life, for there are forms of life whose characteristics are but faintly distinguished in a human being. Thus again, the logical simplicity and clarity of the one, we find, cannot be achieved if we would preserve the actual and imaginable variety and vitality of the many. Consistent elimination of all differences in order to realize the universal must end finally in complete insignificance.

Another source of difficulty among the neoclassic writers was that instead of making Sophocles their immediate model, they preferred Seneca, with his literary rather than theatrical forms, as more congenial to their purposes. The Roman literary drama was probably affected by late, debased Peripatetic theory, as was Roman critical literature, but the *Poetics* was then unknown, and the sources used by Roman writers were many times removed from Aristotle. Thus Seneca was followed by Corneille and Racine, Plautus and Terence by Molière, although Seneca, Plautus, and Terence represent a development of drama posterior to Aristotle and therefore not taken into account in his discussions.

Perhaps the most conspicuous result of late Renaissance and neoclassic devotion to the *Poetics* in the light of Seneca, Plautus, and Terence, was the formulation of the celebrated three unities. The unity of action, finding a specific form in the organic unity of a tragedy, is fundamental in Aristotle's conception. The unity of time is noted by Aristotle, but is not insisted upon as a necessary condition of organic unity. The unity of place was, however, a natural consequence of the unity of time and was therefore made one of the three unities by neoclassic critics. From the sixteenth until the end of the eighteenth century, Aristotle, interpreted and reduced to codified laws by Renaissance scholars, was the supreme and inspired authority in art throughout Europe. Even Lessing said of the *Poetics*, "I consider the work as infallible as the Elements of Euclid."

Imitation in Music, Architecture and Poetry

The instance of modern music is sometimes cited as a disproof of the adequacy of the Greek theory of imitation. But we must remember that it was Greek music that the philosophers had in mind, not our modern music with its dance rhythms, accents, and counterpoint. We have before noted that to the Greeks music was the most imitative of all the arts. To them it was a thrilling image of moral character, and this most probably for the reason that, neglecting dance rhythms and harmony, it followed the inflections and modulations of the speaking voice, and at the same time it was inseparably associated with words, for the Greeks did not fancy mere sounds isolated from rational words and communicable thoughts. It is safe to say that at this date we can have only a very faint impression of the effect on a Greek audience of their prosody and particularly of their tragedy, when we no longer have the score with which the words were combined in the closest union, and we find what indications survive of Greek music, empty and thin. Nor were their dances merely vague pantomimes; the themes and occasions were familiar to every audience, and the words and appropriate music gave a definitely rational significance to the movements and gestures.

Again, while the plausibility of the theory of imitation seems to us best established by sculpture and painting, we find another disproof of the theory in architecture. What is there in nature that is imitated in a modern sky-scraper? The answer to this supposed rebuttal, from the Aristotelian point of view, is very simple: he did not consider architecture a fine art. It was a practical or applied art and not distinguished by the characteristics common to sculpture, painting, music and poetry.

Imitation in Relation to the Concepts of the Classical and of Nature

Our conception of what is classical, indeed, still rests largely upon late Renaissance theories, and a detailed study in recent times of the development of Greek art through its course of a thousand years has not yet overcome the precise and narrow formulas then evolved and preserved today in the illustrations and comments accompanying the classical texts read in secondary schools and colleges. The conception of what is classical in art deserves a book by itself, but the conception of nature varies almost as much from one generation to another, and both are chameleon words, treacherous when employed in generalizations. When we encounter them in reading we nearly always find it necessary to erase the word and fill in the meaning from the context to avoid the simplest and most obvious violations of the syllogism.

We now customarily associate with the word nature, in art, the *genre* of landscape. That is, instead of a philosophical or scientific significance, we refer particularly to vegetable, atmospheric, and geological nature; the earth, the trees, the sky, running and still water, and other elements in landscape. By the love of nature we usually mean a love of things that are presented in landscape, although that particular section of nature does not become beautiful, in distinction from the physically pleasant, independently of the landscape in art.

Certain modern critics, such as Babbitt, have attempted, by stripping away the neoclassic accretions of error, to rescue what is permanently valuable in the ancient conception of nature and in the critics' understanding of it during the classical period in French literature. Babbitt writes of Boileau that when he says, " 'Let nature be your only study,' he does not mean outer nature, or again the nature of this or that individual, but representative human nature. Having decided what is normal either for man or some particular class of men the classicist takes this normal 'nature' for his model and proceeds to imitate it. Whatever in conduct or character is duly restrained and proportionate with reference to the model is said to observe decorum. Probability and decorum are identical in some of their aspects and closely related in all. To recapitulate, a general nature, a core of normal experience, is affirmed by all classicists. From this central affirmation derives the doctrine of imitation, and from imitation in turn the doctrines of probability and decorum." This understanding of nature is obviously quite different from that of the romanticists whose heirs we are.

Yet Babbitt in another place distinguishes the radical defect, from the romantic point of view, which vitiates the neoclassic interpretation of nature, and this criticism may be extended to the conventional understanding of the *Poetics* itself as well as to many of Aristotle's subsequent students. Babbitt says: "The neoclassicists had forgotten in their devotion to what they conceived to be truth and nature, by which they meant normal human nature, the supreme rôle of the imagination, or, if one prefers, of illusion in both art and life. They hoped, as we have seen, to achieve their grandeur of generality by a merely judicious imitation."

A most important aspect of the doctrine of imitation is that it is a logically necessary explanation of art if the usual view of the relation between the beauty of art and the beauty of nature is admitted. If the beauty of nature is prior both in existence and in human appreciation, then the beauty of art is in imitation of that beauty, one is a copy of the other. Lalo has ably explored this analysis of the situation. He points out also that where intensity is taken as the test of beauty, the idea that art is an imitation of nature can hardly be avoided, for our keenest and most commonly experienced realizations of beauty, he says, come from nature.

If beauty is one, and the beauty of art follows and depends upon that of nature, we may reasonably expect to find the greatest beauties of art to be those already found in nature, and the relation between the two to be one of imitation. Thus Leonardo said that the eye receives from beauty in painting the same pleasure which it does from natural beauty, and Kant declared that the fine arts are art in proportion as they seem at the same time to be nature. Sincerity and truthfulness in the imitation of nature are insisted upon by both the idealists and the realists. In fact, if we collect the recorded utterances and thoughts of great artists, no matter what their style may be, we shall find few indeed who neglect to proclaim themselves students of nature.

As Lalo states, we find in the story of Pygmalion a complete illustration of this point of view. Pygmalion's statue was transformed from the limited beauty of art to the living beauty of the flesh without a change in its distinguishing quality. Abstractly expressed, the naturalistic and unitary conception of beauty is asserted almost universally; there is only one kind of beauty, and the beauty of art imitates that of nature. The French writer's analysis, however, detects two distinct conceptions of what is beautiful in nature, one of which he calls unaesthetic and the other pseudo-aesthetic. He first defines nature, saying: "Subjectively, nature is that which receives our sensations or effective states, in opposition to the activities of our imagination, will, and reason. . . . Objectively, it is the totality of cosmic entities, in opposition to our own personalities." Naturalism, whether mystical or realistic, is apt to find everything in nature essentially beautiful, simply because it is in nature. Thus in art one may find degrees and differences of beauty and ugliness, but in nature such distinctions are invalid, for only beauty is. Beauty and existence are identified, since nature is essentially beautiful, art is so too in proportion to its truthful imitation of what already exists before and outside it.

The pleasure of walking in the open country is, however, simply a pleasure of the senses rather than a perception of beauty. Fresh air, renewed health, change of scene, rest, are in themselves neither beautiful nor ugly; they are, contends Lalo, simply unaesthetic. He again finds no model in nature for the beauty of music and architecture, and he repeats the limitations of this principle when applied to poetry. Bacon once said, "art is man added to nature," but if the value of art consists in what man adds to nature, if in poetry when purely human associations and images are taken away, no poetry remains, it is not nature as such which is carried over into art and constitutes its beauty. The correct view, indeed, seems to be that, apart from pleasurable sensation, beauty in nature is a reflection of the beauty of art, "either a possible work of art or one created by the observer himself, as beautiful as his faculties permit him to make it." Beauty must be a value at least, and where all things are equally beautiful simply because they are, nothing is beautiful, for everything may equally well be ugly. The sentiment of beauty in nature, Lalo concludes, is really an unaesthetic sentiment.

What, however, constitutes the beauty of natural objects? It seems in living things to be a normal or typical character adapted to the species. This is a continuation of the thought expressed by Socrates that beauty is potential good, and such typical beauty of living forms is often explained by the principle of sexual selection. Taine said every object and every being is beautiful which clearly reveals the dominating characteristics of its species, and classical generalized types serve to illustrate this point, but romantic and particularly naturalistic art afford cases to the contrary. Kant had neo-classical art in mind when he said, "A natural beauty is a thing that is beautiful; artistic beauty is the reproduction of a thing." But Lalo claims that accordingly "the inventors of photography are the greatest artists in the world, second only to the inventors of mirrors."

"The spiritual state of a genuine lover of beauty is less that of considering every work of art as a potential reality, than every reality as a possible work of art," Lalo continues. The Goncourts offer us an extreme instance of the aesthetic attitude towards art. They wrote: "Attempts have been made to define the beauty in art. What is it? The beautiful is that which appears abominable to eyes without education. The beautiful is that which your mistress and your maid instinctively think horrid." A more abstract statement is Hegel's: "Beauty in nature does not appear except as a reflection of the beauty of the spirit." Aeschylus, in describing Iphigenia as she went to the sacrifice, makes his chorus says, "she is beautiful as art." It is, indeed, less absurd to see a hidden art in nature than a weakened and enfeebled copy of nature in art, and human imagination is not merely anthropomorphic in seeing a desirable end in the processes of nature. Nature in itself is unaesthetic, neither beautiful nor ugly, but seen through art it acquires beauty, and its beauty may therefore be described as pseudo-aesthetic.

Imitation Justified by the Hermes of Praxiteles

The theory of imitation may be effectively illustrated in various aspects by the statue of *Hermes and the Infant Dionysus*. It dates from the middle of the fourth century B. C., it is the work of Praxiteles, one of the most popular and influential of the great Greek sculptors; and above all it is important because of the fact that it is the only surviving original work of which there is no doubt as to its being a first hand production of the master himself. It was discovered in 1887 and is preserved in the museum at Olympia.

A remarkable situation which confronts us in the study of Greek art and one that can hardly be emphasized too often, particularly in relation to the theory of imitation, is seen here. We can probably determine the styles of the great masters of the fifth century, Myron, Phidias, and Polyclitus with fair approximation to the truth, but while copies of the works of the others exist, undoubted originals are not available, and of the work of Phidias we have not even reliable copies. While neoclassic enthusiasm for classical art was in the main an enthusiasm for debased Roman copies, so stereotyped and superficial in their smoothness that they libel the vitality of original Greek work, a historically correct understanding of Greek art is, even today, much hampered. A romantic and literary enthusiasm for the marks of time, for the ruined and picturesque, affects our present devotion to Greek art, for all we possess of their major works is incomplete, fragmentary and broken.

In most instances the effect of time is radically to alter the character and appeal of objects. Of this change we ought always to be aware. It is not at all unlikely that if we could by a miracle be transported to either Athens or Rome in the height of their glory, we should be shocked by the gaudy and arbitrary coloring, by the crowding together of primitive fetiches, retained because of their religious usefulness, with works of the finest style, and by an almost complete disregard for city planning, or consistency of style in the ensemble and environment. Among the throng in the famous places we should probably discover a complete absence of the calm decorum and serenity which we associate with classical ages on the basis of lifeless Roman garden sculpture and plaster casts in our museums.

The statue of *Hermes,* in any case, is the only existing fully authenticated work of a Greek sculptor of the first rank, and it is notable for qualities other than those commonly deemed classical. The pose is graceful and relaxed, not majestic or divine. The hair is treated not in a conventionalized or schematic form, but in one which is impressionistic of the masses rather than minutely accurate in detail. Thus, while the hair imitates the optical impression only and not the tactile, the body imitates both. In this particular work the distortion of the anatomy, found in the modeling of the head, is a departure from strict imitation of the normal fact, just as the exaggeration of the external oblique muscle, over the iliac crest, so prominent in the *Doryphorus* of Polyclitus and most other Greek sculptors of the great period, is also a striking violation of strict anatomical accuracy. In modeling the pelvis of their female figures the Greeks of the same period departed from anatomical accuracy and made it approximate the male. In contrast to the impressionistic generalization of the hair, the rest of the body of *Hermes* is delicately modulated and graduated in its innumerable planes, so that it catches the light in such a way as to suggest the translucency and responsiveness to touch of living flesh. The bulges of flesh across the forehead and around the eyes create expressive shadows which convey an effect of dreamy, poetic melancholy, the god seems hardly aware of the child whom he supports on his left arm. The face is intellectual and terminates in a pointed chin, which is far from indicating aggressiveness or power consistent with the strong frame. The brows project so far over the eyes that the eyes lie in an inclined plane, and the lower lids seem to flow into the eyeballs. The mouth is small and almost feminine in character.

In antiquity critics praised Phidias and Polyclitus for the nobility and ethical quality of their work, but Praxiteles and Scopas for their pathos. The statue of *Hermes* and other works which are attributed to Praxiteles or his school on the basis of technical similarities are therefore distinguished by a suggestive charm, a soft and meditative moment neither representing nor inciting to action, but leading to an almost sentimental revery.

An interesting phenomenon appears in the usual photographs of this statue as well as in those of many other works produced in Roman or Greek antiquity. The intrinsically baroque process of photography, emphasizing values of light and dark, accentuating transitions or exaggerating the contrast, obliterating contours and suppressing volume, prefers, as did baroque art, a diagonal view, which is more suggestive of movement and vitality then the frontal view. Most views of the statue of *Hermes,* taken at an angle to the axis of the figure, intensify the pathos or sentimental effectiveness of the figure. This can easily be verified by comparing photographs which bring out the musical quality of the head, taken from in front and to the left, with those taken directly from in front.

In contemplating the statue of *Hermes* we realize that it is in fact a piece of stone in the form of a man. The stone achieved this shape, not by accident or through any gradual and normal change which stone may undergo, but by the hands and skill of a man whose name is known although he lived twenty-two hundred years ago. It is beautiful, the strict theory goes, as an imitation of man's body, a man who is himself a natural object. The statue came into being through human agency, it exists alongside other specific and individual things in its environment, it also is a thing and not a mere dream or hallucination. But it is not true to any particular Greek from whom the dimensions and proportions as well as accidents of surface were minutely copied. Even in this example of Greek sculpture which we judge to be notable for its emotional quality, compared with the still more generalized and typical work of earlier artists, there is an absence of that strangeness, the eccentricity of the individual, which bring to us in more realistic work the knowledge of unique personality.

It is improbable that anybody should be deceived into thinking that this was a living man actually present in the flesh, but if we were daily familiar with the legend of Hermes and the child Dionysus, whom he took to Nysa in Boeotia to be nursed by the nymphs, at the command of Zeus, we should doubtless recognize the divinities represented. Thus, as a later writer remarked, most Greeks would find in this statue a more beautiful image of the gods than any they could ever have imagined alone and unaided, and furthermore, after having seen this beautiful group, one could not think of Hermes as other than thus perpetually youthful and charming.

A photograph of the actual Greek who came nearest to resembling the statue would not convey to us this superior imaginative power that the work of art does, nor can even a photograph of the marble object give us the tangible and visible beauty of the object as it exists in space filled with light. A mirror, however, gives back to the observer both the living man and the statue. The Greek observer sees in the mirror more nearly what he sees in the original, as the modern spectator does also. The reflected image and its meaning to the ancient and to the modern is, however, probably more significant because of its differences than because of its similarities. To sceptical and cultured Greeks it is hardly possible that this work's main significance was its religious persuasiveness, although it is probable that the statue was admired and popular because for the majority of the Greek citizens, visitors, and slaves, it made the existence of the god whose form it embodied more vivid and convincing.

Sculpture Which Refutes a Naïve Theory of Imitation

At first sight, the statue of *Hermes* may seem to us an imitation of the most perfect male body imaginable, but this may be partly because European tradition since the Renaissance, fortified by the recovered classical literature, considers the production of the golden age of Greek art to have reached the highest pitch of artistic excellence possible to human beings. We are so familiar with the idealized types presented by Greek art and feebly reflected in Roman copies, that again our vision and our imagination conform to the actual productions of art, rather than contrariwise. The idea of balanced, restrained perfection is, on the whole, for Occidentals, to be encountered most clearly in the ripe age of Athenian culture.

But the Greeks themselves of a period less than two centuries before had ideas of beauty that were radically distinct. Between 1886 and 1890 a series of statues was recovered from the débris of the Acropolis, buried by the Athenians when they returned to the city after its sack by the Persians in the year 480 B. C. These archaic maidens were probably votive figures represented as making offerings to Athena in the sacred precinct of the goddess. They show strong Ionic influence but were made by Attic sculptors. The folds of the robes are elaborately draped, and the statues are colored, the usual hues employed being red, green, blue, and black. The purpose of the color was not naturalistic, as we can see from the fact that the hair was painted red, as was also the iris of the eye. In still earlier sculpture the male human bodies were painted red, blue was the color of hair and beards, and although there is some doubt as to the extent and nature of the coloring in later ages, it can hardly be doubted that Greek sculpture, like that of the Middle Ages, consistently employed color throughout its whole development.

More obvious departure from imitation of natural appearance is to be noted in the heads of these votive maidens. Their heads are high and approximate the oval shape of the egg, the eyes are long and narrow, sometimes almost triangular, and a strange expression is given them by a fixed smile, characteristic of much archaic sculpture, although there was probably no intention to give such an impression to the face.

One interesting fact about the statues is that in every case the hands extended and containing fruit or some other offering, are broken off. But the Athenians had no pious veneration for past art as such. In their direct simplicity of the self-sufficient now and here, they would have nothing of what was broken or defective, and the same ruthlessness that led them to expose malformed children made them destroy all damaged statues when the opportunity came to build the city anew and adorn it with works of art in the style of the day.

The old-fashioned idea that the object of art, and of sculpture in particular, is complete anatomical imitation of nature, leads to a disheartening conclusion. If the aim of sculpture is simply external imitation and the highest grade of perfection was already reached in the fourth and fifth centuries B. C., then everything since has been an unpardonable series of lapses from perfection, of wilful vagaries when perfect models have been available to those who desired to imitate perfectly. Yet even the Greeks themselves changed their styles and their phases of interest in later times. The really classical moment in ancient civilization was but a portion of the long development of Greek art. In Hellenistic times types drawn from daily life were depicted in sculpture, and the naturalism, mingled with sentimentality, present in the *Old Market Woman* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, does not hesitate to reproduce the wrinkled face and the shrunken skin of the old woman offering chickens and fruit for sale.

Thus if we apply the term classical to any product of Greek or Roman art we are left with a meaning that is very vague indeed. In the course of ancient art's development phenomena are to be found that parallel every one of the major developments of European art in the period after ancient civilization had certainly collapsed, from the eleventh century A. D., down to the present. On the other hand, if we use the term in a critical sense to denote certain characteristics of style, architectural ideals of construction and proportion in particular, we shall limit the term to something found only in a fraction of ancient civilization and of subsequent cultures.

Since what the statue of *Hermes* imitates is not a particular man, but a type, its formal perfection, diminished in any case by its anatomical exaggeration and its suggestion of emotion, differs from the ideals imitated by artists in other times, even by the Greeks themselves in preceding and succeeding ages. That for its own age the *Hermes* did imperfectly embody an invisible ideal, never experienced in any individual man and not even in this remarkable statue is, however, an assumption which alone can distinguish works of fine art from useful tools and instruments. At the same time such an assumption can account for inevitable and necessary changes in artistic styles, without establishing judgments false both to history and to philosophy, of approach to and recession from a unique moment of perfection.

Work like the *Hermes* is more serious and philosophical than the death mask of Napoleon, because it represents general and not particular truth. *Hermes* shows us something that is according to probability and necessity, cohering in a vital organic unity, according to the best and highest imaginative intuition of the Greek spirit in the fourth century B. C. It is not accurate imitation of the accidents of appearance, nor is it on the other hand a dull personification like some of the Roman statues of divinities. It is not perfect in any real sense, a final and absolute term of human endeavor and understanding, from which there can be no change but for the worse. It is, no more than any particular human being, not all of humanity, but as distinguished from the individual man, it presents more enduringly and more truly than any mortal frame something corresponding to an intellectual ideal of beauty in which, as beings with individual intellects, we may participate in the measure of our capacity.

In ancient times, however, and particularly among the Romans, portrait busts were produced in large number so that almost no museum of art lacks representation of this kind. In addition to the numerous portraits of the emperors, poets, and philosophers, some of which are idealized, there are large numbers of anonymous individuals, probably retained as monuments of family piety in Roman households, or as parts of funeral monuments and tombs. These are realistic in a high degree, they have faithfully preserved the accidents and imperfections of the original model, literal truthfulness not only to appearance but to the imponderable qualities of prevailing mood and expression which we call character. They penetrate the distinctive configuration of the mind which determines personality and renders the individual unique. In this respect they are not surpassed by the most skilled portrait painting of the seventeenth century. We do not know the names or the fortunes of all these people but they speak to us, though dead, and though silent they speak in a language which we can all understand. Here there is no formal perfection, there is no harmony of the ideal and the actual, but there is an exalted and illuminating fidelity to a long-vanished particular fact. Thus the Roman portrait is not deceptive nor is it generalized humanity in the sense that it embodies an average or composite concept, but even so these portraits give us types of character which we can easily recognize and respond to, they give us vividly the personalities of eternal Rome, they now inhabit as products of art a country where flesh and blood can establish no permanent abiding place.

When we come to the Roman sculpture of a much later age, to works of the earlier Christian centuries, we find profound changes taking place. Scholars dispute whether these stylistic phenomena resulted from Oriental influences, particularly through Syria, or whether they were the results of a natural evolution dependent on the inner course of Roman art and only facilitated or hindered by influence from other cultures. Works such as the colossal head of *Constantine* in the Palace of the Conservatori at Rome, the huge figure of *Valentinian I* at Barletta, and the friezes on the arch of Constantine, impress us as marching toward mediaeval style rather than reluctantly departing from Athenian patterns. In the monumental sculpture there is formal pattern, and symmetry, but not the humanity of the *Hermes;* abstract ideals of an almost hieratic and metaphysical cast are conveyed by late Roman art. The statue of *Hermes* and that of *Constantine,* as distinguished from the *Old Market Woman* and the realistic portraits, both justify the observation of Plotinus that, "Whenever we admire a representation our delight is really directed to what is represented." We look to a different kind of generalized object of thought in each case; in both we look to something not completely visible yet felt to be real.

Most Familiar Examples of Greek Art in Relation to Imitation

The best preserved and most frequent of all survivals of classical Greek art, the objects most certain to be encountered and admired in any collection, should respond best to the search for random objects by which to test the theory of imitation. These are Greek vases.

The paintings or drawings on Greek vases illustrate the whole spectacle of Greek daily life as well as Greek mythology. In a way they suggest to us what Greek painting may have been like, although no extensive remains of earlier Greek painting survive. But the figures represented are in sharp, delicately traced outlines, with flat decorative areas of color. They are exquisitely placed in the spaces which they adorn, and while they embody notable departures from anatomical accuracy, such as representation of the eye seen from in front even when placed in profile, these distortions are trifling compared with the whole circumstance of representation in terms of line. With the exception of single hairs and other rare phenomena, there is nothing in ordinary visual reality corresponding to a line. We have before our eyes, as the impressionists assert, overlapping and adjoining areas of different color and value, but geometrical figures, artificial constructions of line, do not occur unaided by human abstraction and artifice, nor do tangible objects exist purely in terms of line. Pattern and design, conventionalized in the styles of ornament which nearly always accompany the figures on Greek vases, afford an effort of human imagination, successfully realized, compared with which other elements in human art are coarse naturalism. When we come to modern drawing in black and white, the process of abstraction has already gone so far that cubism and so-called abstract modernisms are subordinate issues.

The incomparable grace and sensitive proportions of Greek vases exhibit the feeling for formal beauty which we also highly prize in Greek architecture. But it is important to observe that with the exception of one group, those placed on graves, Greek vases were all useful domestic vessels and not rare and precious things alienated from daily life, to be protected in public exhibitions or counted among the treasures of the wealthy. For us, however, they are, and legitimately so, objects of fine art, on a lower level indeed than the *Hermes* of Praxiteles, but probably not much inferior to the anonymous lyrics of the Greek anthology.

In any case, the kind of classical relic most apt to be met with by the casual student of the theory of imitation, is the Greek vase, and the non-imitative elements in its decoration far surpass the naturalistic ones. Thus we may safely conclude that if the concept of imitation is extended to include the most important and distinguishing traits of classical and other art, the word itself requires explanation. If we adhere to its naturalistic and popular interpretation, imitation does not answer to the observed facts of the greatest productions of classical art. It is in that case a partial and inadequate meaning which excludes far more of the historically beautiful than it includes.

But since in works of art, actually realized to be beautiful, there is some sort of relation, felt necessary and essential, between the object of art and reality, does it consist in the fact that art imitates without duplicating? Can we go so far as to say that the meaning of art lies in the fact that it is not what it seems? Is the meaning of art to be found in illusion?

CHAPTER VI

IS ILLUSION THE MEANING OF ART?

How is it that in spite of its lack of the substantial existence possessed by the model, a work of art somehow reproduces that object after which it is modeled, and also affords us satisfactions which the original does not convey? One answer is, through illusion. The object of art seems to be something which it is not. We realize that it is not what it seems; indeed because it is not, we welcome the deception of our senses, because it offers an escape to a realm where material existence no longer binds the spirit.

Illusion is a plausible consequence of or alternative to both the principal interpretations of imitation. Imitation of the accidents and imperfections of concrete reality, when carried over into art, may impress us strongly with the genuineness and sincerity of the artist's creation. The persuasiveness of his duplication of ordinary experience makes us admire all the more the skill with which he has conveyed to us a sense of the tangibility of the individual things represented. To reproduce so convincingly in a medium which, after all, retains only a portion of the object's reality is accomplished through an accepted delusion, but it is an illusion still.

On the other hand, the *Hermes* does not give us any actual individual, and a little reflection shows us that it is merely a probable and possible representation of the human form. It derives its value from the fact that it objectifies for our contemplation and delight a vision of approximate human perfection which most of us could not produce or even imagine in a dream, without the artist's help. There is something unreal and visionary, something that we know surpasses normal human experience, a touch of madness about such embodiment of what is not to be found in the normal course of nature but can be produced through an artist's inspired skill. All that we can grasp with our hands and see with our eyes has never yielded quite this feeling or sight; the artist suggests something transcending experience, and this is again an illusion. For how can we transcend our senses?

The impression that art is an illusion is strong in the case of the orthodox Platonist. If the things of this world are only copies of an eternally real and enduring idea, then this world is itself an illusion. What is behind and underlying phenomena is the reality. On the other hand, art objects which, by the theory of imitation, copy objects in nature which in turn are already copies of the real, do not, as they should, immediately strike us with their falsity and derivative character twice removed from the idea. Somehow they seem to approach nearer to the unchangingly true than the fleeting though tangible and visible natural objects of sense. For Plato the unaccountable power of art to prevail even over sensible phenomena contradicted his metaphysics and being unable to harmonize it with his conception of reality, he resorted to force, rigidly regulating or exterminating it. Neoplatonism later led people to see in art a revelation of what is with difficulty seen in ordinary experience, the domination of nature by mind, as the artist approaches closer to the idea than the practical man, dominating his material and releasing through it a vision of ultimate reality. Thus instead of being a harmful or dangerous illusion, the fact that art is not what it seems gives us a saving illusion, an insight into the essentially real. Body, matter, material existence is then the illusion, for essentially it is that which is not.

Imitation as a principle explaining art has its parallel also in a theory of knowledge which surmises that concepts, ideas, definitions, even words, are convenient and serviceable substitutes for the things which they describe, and are so in proportion to their being exact and adequate copies of those things. The formalism to which such a view easily leads produced an inevitable revolt, leading to subjective idealism in philosophy and the principle of illusion in modern aesthetics. That concepts and words do not comprehend all the truth there is, that it does not seem possible, after all, to reduce living reality to a series of truths demonstrable in the geometric mode, is a profound disappointment to many earnest minds. It is an easy step from the observation that human apprehension of the real is partial and limited, to a conclusion that nothing sensed or known is true, and humanity is the helpless victim of a gigantic conspiracy, a cosmic illusion.

Illusion and Disillusion

Such an attitude, which sometimes finds peculiar satisfaction in the deliberate deceptions of art, can be termed illusion, when it is welcomed and accepted. It is, in a way, the more readily admitted, it is at least honest, in comparison with the disillusion which inevitably follows too simple a trust in what we see and hear and touch. The gloomy combination of Puritanism with Calvinistic formal logic, however, finds both life and art, so far as they are pleasant, equally intolerable and misleading. To those who, unlike the Puritan, find in art a relief from the chaos of sensation and the frailty of knowledge, art is in the nature of an opiate, and the theory may therefore be called the narcotic principle, just as imitation, naïvely held, may be termed the plaster cast theory.

A passage, quoted by Carritt, from Stevenson's essay on *Walking Tours,* presents engagingly the appeal of this point of view. "We fall in love, we drink hard, we run to and fro upon the earth like frightened sheep. And now you are to ask yourself if, when all is done, you would not have been better to sit by the fire at home, and be happy thinking. To sit still and contemplate,—to remember the faces of women without desire, to be pleased by the great deeds of men without envy, to be everything and everywhere in sympathy and yet content to remain where and what you are,—is not this to know both wisdom and virtue, and to dwell with happiness?"

With philosophic technicalities and greater elaboration, the thought here offered can be worked out by a Konrad Lange in a theory that art is conscious self-deception. Man, it is urged, has a natural instinct to unreal and imaginative constructions in place of tangible and visible reality, and it is this instinct which the artist most efficiently satisfies. The illusion, felt to be such, which art affords, nevertheless carries us to an environment which is more stimulating, more exhilarating, and more in harmony with our longings and aspirations than any we are apt to find in very truth, and the world of dreams is the world where all our wishes come true. The misanthrope is the type usually associated with Lange's view of art. The cynic believes that men are brave and women are beautiful only in stories and legends. If we would find courage and beauty we must turn to art for there alone shall we find it. But a more proper comparison is with the opium smoker, who will endure hardships and sacrifices in order to indulge his dreams. A thoroughly consistent misanthrope would not waste his time even on art, for the hallucinations and ecstasies of the last stages of a hunger-strike against life would provide both rapture and release. Some Indian mystics have, indeed, carried their conviction to its logical end, and starved themselves to death.

An enthusiasm for the element of illusion in art can readily be understood as a reaction against formalism and the rationalistic excesses which lead to formalism. The romantic philosophers in their revolution against that trend in the eighteenth century emphasized the will as the chief element in the human spirit, rather than the reason. They stressed the aridity and coldness of reason, that it can only destroy and not create; it may be the key to the secret of what has been but reason by itself cannot produce anything. The will, however, always is and is always moving; as the goal of its progress its object has a reality whether rational or not. In 1809, Schelling declared; "In the last resort there is no other being but will. *Wollen ist Ursein* (will is primal being); and to this alone apply the predicates fathomless, eternal, independent of time, self-affirming." The will is the essential element in life, and whether its objects are true and good or not, the persistent activity of will is more important than the static formulas of reason.

Impressionism in modern literature is often associated with the conviction that art and probably life too are illusions. "The good critic," said Anatole France, "is he who relates the adventures of the soul among masterpieces." And he continues: "There is no such thing as objective criticism any more than there is objective art, and all who flatter themselves that they put aught but themselves into their work are dupes of the most fallacious illusion. The truth is that one never gets out of oneself." In another place, he asserts: "To love and suffer in this world, images suffice; it is not necessary that their objectivity be demonstrated. In whatever fashion one conceives of life, and though one knows it to be the dream of a dream—one lives."

In Anatole France as well as in Spingarn, the view that art is illusion is present in different degrees, but its essentially pessimistic direction may be avoided by the distinction which Coleridge established between fancy and creative imagination. The illusion which delicately sophisticated sceptics, such as France, or coarsely sensual materialists, like Aretino, perceive in art and elsewhere, comes, to use Coleridge's terms, from classifying all art as the product of fancy. Coleridge's Neoplatonic and romantic distinction is so vital in the whole controversy that it is well to reproduce it here:

Creative Imagination and Fancy

"The Imagination then I consider as either primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perceptions, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I am. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree,* and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital,* even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead. Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by the word Choice."

That illusion is not simply a deceptive appearance of physical presence, a thought which might also be suggested by the problem of representation, is a legitimate conclusion from important aspects of art history. The expressionism of El Greco was a movement against both the eclectic mannerists and the superficial naturalism of the *tenebrosi.* It was an effort, unsatisfied by the lifeless or meaningless productions of preceding and contemporary art, to produce painting which should be at once actively moving and vividly significant, and it was not intended to reproduce appearances deceptively. A feeling for the abstract and metaphysical significance of eternal religious truth led Byzantine art to shun any suggestion of natural appearance and motion, and to seek majestically fixed and abstract forms. It is said that many Chinese artists were not able or willing to paint except in the grip of a trance-like state in which they were oblivious of their physical surroundings and aware only of the inner significance of what they transferred to paper or silk as the expression of that feeling. Thus an attitude of scientific accuracy or intention to reproduce appearance faithfully has not dominated in all art.

While Occidental art has been concerned mainly with the problem of representing physical shape in a different physical material, there have been periods of intenser emotion when the European tradition also tended toward more vivid expression of that which it felt to be significant, in some cases toward the abstract and subjective. Thus the baroque style in general was an effort to attain in painting a variety in space with a unity of light and movement, in contrast to the art of the Renaissance which was more concerned with an intellectual harmony of the elements extended in a unified space. As extension in space is somehow felt to be more real than duration in time or motion, the productions of classical moments in art, both in antiquity and in modern cultures, have been almost continuously admired. But works of art from periods which attach so much importance to the vital movement of time, that the precise contemporary quality can be recovered only with effort, do not afterwards enjoy such ready appreciation.

Illusion is accepted as a necessary element in experience not only by the impressionist, but by some classicists also, although they attach a different value to it. Thus Babbitt asserts: "Such vision of reality as is vouchsafed to finite man must ever come to him through a veil of illusion. This inseparableness of reality and illusion may embarrass the metaphysician, but not the positivist who discriminates between the sham vision and the true, not on metaphysical grounds, but by their fruits." Thus there persists in Babbitt's thought a relic of Schopenhauer's terminology, but the usual implications of the concept of illusion are avoided by recourse to pragmatism.

Illusion in Plato

Perhaps one of the greatest sources for the feeling of disillusion and unavoidable self-deception in European thought is that celebrated myth of the cave in Plato's *Republic*. It served him to illustrate the relation between human experience and the superior reality of the ideas. But with a growing distrust in sensation, together with the conviction that sensation alone exists, the passage has been treated as an illustration of the futility of human attempts to reach certitude. The passage begins:

"Behold! human beings living in a sort of underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all across the den; they have been here from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them; for the chains are arranged in such a manner as to prevent them from turning their heads. At a distance above and behind them the light of a fire is blazing, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have before them, over which come the puppets. . . . At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to go up and turn his neck round and walk and look at the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then imagine some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now he is approaching real being and has a truer sight and vision of more real beings, —what will be his reply?"

When sensation alone is believed to be real and yet this conviction is undermined by distrust, the conviction grows that ideas are precisely the opposite of Plato's conclusion: ideas are the greatest illusion of all. Speaking of the Puritan background of the American college, Van Wyck Brooks declares: "Indeed there is nothing so tragic and so ominous as the familiar saying that college is the happiest time of one's life. Yet I think that the majority of college men think of their college life in this way. They deliberately put their Golden Age behind them—and, as things are, they know it is behind them. But consider what a comment this is on the American university itself,—a place, one can fairly say, where ideals are cherished precisely because they are ineffectual, because they are ineptly and mournfully beautiful, because they make one cynical, because they make life progressively uninteresting, because, practically and in effect, they are illusions and frauds and infinitely charming lies."

The *Hermes* of Praxiteles exhibits to our eyes a beautiful human body. But there never was such a man any more than there ever was a divinity named Hermes, and the statue is not a man but only a stone. Economic value alone therefore among values may come to be recognized as genuine. The statue can be sold and enrich the seller so that he may possess many automobiles, motion pictures, and radios, or it can be acquired by a collector to attract envy or by a museum to attract visitors. Contrasted with these realities offered by even a provisional science and a deceptive equipment of sensation, the beauty that the statue embodies may seem merely an emotionalized concept, a word charged with emotive force, a mere illusion.

Consistent with a common mood of disillusion is the contention of some writers that all the arts are beautiful insofar as they approach the impermanence of music and the drama, not as objects of recollection, but as fields of concrete experience. Only momentary and perishing accomplishments are truly beautiful, there is something tragic in them all, they expire while we fix our attention the more closely upon them, and from the first note of the orchestra or the rising of the curtain we know that the moment will inevitably come when the orchestra will sound its last note and the player speak the last word of the act. In the plastic arts there is to superficial observers a value as imitation of natural appearance, but in music there is no imitation of natural things. It echoes the motions and strivings of the will, and it is also an illusion for it is not the imitation of a tangible, natural thing. It moves strictly within a world of its own creation, but, it is felt, this is true of the will also, for it creates its own goal only as a term of its activity, and when the end of desire has been finally attained, the will also ceases to be.

More often the mood of disillusion and the attachment to art as an illusion which offers an escape from deceptive physical reality, come from a deep realization of human helplessness. We are unable to secure the permanence of anything, no matter how dear or precious. We cannot protect against the fatal injury of time even the most true and beautiful things which we create or recognize to the limit of our capacity. Such a profound disappointment, a conviction that the world is an unequal dualistic reality, in which what is evil is sure to prevail, a sentiment of bitterness because we are victims of unavoidable delusion and deception, has in the history of religion produced a belief in black magic, Satanism, and other miscellaneous offspring of fear and disappointment. It seems no more wonderful that evil can be propitiated and directed to one's wishes than that good can exist and yet fail to protect those who adhere to it and strive to obey it.

In the neoclassic literary vision of Greek antiquity, the picture appears to be as neat and clean as an outline engraving in an early illustrated edition of Winckelmann's history of classical art. The ethnologist and archaeologist, however, have filled in those outlines and surrounded those unreal figures with an atmosphere in which the dead air of a museum no longer stifles the student. In antiquity there were many remainders, in popular life, of primitive folklore and nature worship. Above all, the Greek mysteries and orgiastic cults provided a means of relief from the tightness of the city-state. The turbulent ingratitude of historical Athens, like that of Florence centuries later, was a stimulus to emulation and individual achievement, but Athens was remarkable for an absence of classic peace and dignity. The view seems plausible, that the placid abstractions of Plato's philosophy and the formal perfection of Greek sculpture are to some extent surviving expressions of a deep longing for a peace and permanence which were all the more desired because they were so rarely experienced.

While the Greeks objectified a desired but unrealized calm in their art and thought, the modern artist finds calm perfection nowhere. The contemporary industrial and capitalistic machine, organized for continuous mass production of consumable goods, finds small room for the independent artist except as a minister to luxury and display. He is not a genuine workman, he cannot join a labor-union and enjoy security of wages and employment. What he produces is not according to specification or pattern, he cannot tell how or why it is useful, he cannot be sure that anybody will want it enough to offer a price for it. There is no organized method of production for art, and no organized market for it as standard merchandise.

To be concerned with the production of art, therefore, is to be producing something with regard to which there is no certainty except that it is not what it appears. No wonder that dealers in antiquities and art objects are sometimes less scrupulous than jewelers, for they also may be persuaded that what they handle is not intrinsically good; it is only an illusion, depending on publicity and the whims of public taste, whereas diamonds can be weighed and their quality objectively measured. When it comes to solid enjoyment, the business man, whether he is an art dealer or a coal merchant, may prefer a good game of golf, where the rules are simple and clear, and where the rewards, no matter how slight one's skill, are very definite and enjoyable. There, immediate and first-hand, keen emotions are to be procured. The game has nothing of the deceptive imitation that painting suggests, nor the second-hand and artificial pleasure associated with an Italian primitive a million times removed from the culture and aims of the casual golf-player. The game is pleasure intrinsic, immediate, and objective. The merchant is playing golf, he is enjoying himself in the company of players whom he feels to be real and not imaginary companions. The game is not one he made up all by himself and he is not playing it in a dream. For his pleasure golf, not art, is the real thing, when art is illusion.

Flight from Reality by Means of Art

In the main, however, the theory now being considered is welcomed as an escape, however transitory, from boredom, from the staleness and the flatness of the daily routine. The motivating ideas of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were affected by deep-seated repugnance, from which they found adequate escape in music, and their theories, reflecting such an attitude, are today frequently revived as an inspiration and defense of art. According to Nietzsche, furthermore, Apolline art is formal and familiar while Dionysiac art, in which may be included what is today called abstract design, is purposely strange, securing a more intense experience and producing a surer release from insipid or tiresome conventionality in life and art. Therefore these widely accepted philosophers would seem to indicate that the excellence of art objects is to be tested by their efficacy in achieving a release from unhappiness. The state of feeling, the emotional tone induced, should be as completely satisfying as a hypnotic spell, imparting a profound conviction of freedom, of relief from pain.

The more familiar justifications of expressionism and other advanced movements in modern art imply, as a rule, that this principle is favorable to the products of their creative energy. Art finds for them its highest value and a sufficient rational basis insofar as it is a deliberate flight from reality, even from the common conventional forms in which the mass of contemporary human beings unite in shaping external reality. The very novelty and strangeness of the unfamiliar and unconventional forms produced by new art movements yield satisfaction because they have thus an intrinsic appeal to the weary and unhappy. The significance of this mood is illustrated in another way by Arthur

Symons's appraisal of the aesthetic value of puppet plays. Puppets imitate actors, he believes, who imitate actions of real men and thus, by a sort of inverted Platonic ascent puppets possess aesthetic value in the highest degree since they are at once imitative and unreal, in fact they are further removed from familiar existence than any other art products.

The intellectual attitude behind such ideas, one immediately recognizes, is the subjective and introspective bias derived in large measure from such thinkers as Berkeley and Locke. In Berkeley, illusion is the result of a convinced absolute spiritualism. Locke had first declared that the idea of corporeal substance or material existence is as far removed from our thinking and feeling as that of spiritual substance or being. Extending this view, Berkeley went on to say that matter really does not exist, that spirit alone absolutely is, and that all sensible qualities are secondary.

Disillusion is an inevitable consequence of such a persuasion. If sensible qualities are indeed but mental products, why can we not control these ideas or images in the mind, in the same way that we can summon concepts before our attention or banish them from it, or combine and arrange them in any rank or order that suits our fancy? Berkeley had said: "The ideas of sense are allowed to have more in them, that is, to be more strong, orderly, and coherent, than the creatures of the mind; but this is no argument that they exist without the mind." But if things which are thus strong, orderly, and coherent, are illusions, as compared with the creatures of the mind, what becomes of our thoughts, including the perception and contemplation of beauty?

A more modern version of the same conclusion follows from the belief that beauty in nature is neither the work of God nor the constant quality of the object. The beauty of nature is in itself felt to be an illusion, because it is not objectively existent, it is merely the result of a subjective activity. The activity is variable and is conditioned by the physical state of the subject; and thus not only is the beauty of nature an illusion, but if the beauty of art depends on that of nature, beauty in art is also unmistakably an illusion. The sensuous character of art objects, the concrete individual things to which the idea of art applies, brings them into the category of chaotic, shifting, uncertain, relatively unreal being, common to human sensation in general. Does it not follow, then, that even ideas such as that of beauty, which at times seem to be so vivid and immediate, are illusions, not realities thoroughly known, because in art they are perceived necessarily in close union with sensation?

However, there is one factor presented in the situation offered by art which, in comparison with the ordinary objects of sensation, places it on a different level. It can be admitted that the external world, the usual objects of experience, may not exist in the way that they seem to for us. But art is by definition unreal, the statue is not a man but a stone, the aesthetic image produced is a product of the observer's imagination, something indifferent to animals' experience. Seeing that art is realized in advance to be thus substantially and effectively unreal, it cannot disappoint on the score of such unreality. On the contrary it may be hailed as a beneficent illusion because it does not profoundly deceive us as ordinary objects of sense so often do. It is a pleasing and not a satiric or destructive illusion. Paradoxically, the illusion of art, felt to be such, rescues us from the deceptions of the external world which we too rarely realize are only phenomena after all.

Schopenhauer's Estimate of Art

The influence of Schopenhauer's views has persisted with perhaps its greatest force in the contemporary attitude towards art. According to that philosopher the great value of art is that it frees us from subjection to the will. In his *World as Will and Idea,* he abandons Kant's conviction that beauty is purely subjective, and discovers in aesthetic contemplation a genuine emancipation of the intellect from subordination to the will. In that state, when the mind is filled with pure intellectual forms, which Schopenhauer identifies with the Platonic ideas, as objectifications of the will, the misery of human existence is overcome. A happy freedom is enjoyed, because when the will is thus completely objectified, intellect is through that very fact set free from slavery to the will. Such a view implies, as Schopenhauer recognized, that beauty is not confined exclusively to certain classes of things, such as art products or occasional conditions in nature, but everything that is possible is also capable of being perceived as beautiful, if only we have the capacity to do so, a capacity which the philosopher termed genius. As Carritt phrases it: "Beauty, like love, is bestowed by us, and by the perfect genius would be withheld from nothing."

It is not necessary in this place to analyse Schopenhauer's conception of the will, the consciousness of will as idea in man, and the ability of the will to deny itself, attaining victory in annihilation. This metaphysical or, perhaps more properly, mythological aspect of his doctrine is not the one which most impresses modern thinkers who derive their enthusiastic belief in art as illusion from him. The latter accept much of his emotional attitude toward art but disregard the structure of ideas which support his basic principle. At the same time, it is worth noting, his position in ethics is still prevalent, animating humanitarian movements and to be seen clearly in the attitude of yellow or tabloid journals toward crime and criminals. Intellectual pessimism is closely allied with negative definitions of morality. According to Schopenhauer, therefore, the essential element in ethics is sympathy. *Mitleid mit dem Leid,* sympathy with sorrow, is its only approach to a positive rule.

The views of Hans Vaihinger are influential and novel. His system, formulated in *The Philosophy of As-If,* has been described as an "idealistic pragmatic positivism." Relying on the relativity of sensation he asserts that science is incapable of affording objective knowledge of reality, science is simply a means of self-preservation, its justification is biological. Human knowledge cannot be absolute, to believe so is to believe in an illusion. Our knowledge, indeed, rests entirely upon nothing but fictions, it treats things as if they were constituted in ways which cannot really be so. Intellectual analysis cannot penetrate to their real essence. In the various fields of science as well as in religion and metaphysics, everything is useful and more or less consistent fiction. Vaihinger establishes this point by an elaborate and learned collection of evidence. Those fictions, he writes, which most directly contribute to life should in the future be recognized or deliberately organized for that chief purpose. The similarity of this position to American pragmatism is obvious, but Vaihinger chose to emphasize his independence of that movement, and rejected the idea that usefulness is an equivalent to or at least a criterion of truth. His influence has deeply affected the modern mathematical theory of relativity, and he goes so far as to claim that fictions of whose falsity there can be no doubt are not merely useful but indispensable.

The proof of the necessity and extension of fictions in Vaihinger's work depends largely upon the discovery of logical contradictions. For example, he points out that Kant treated the thing-in-itself, God, and other concepts as fictions, but he retained his belief in God. Logical consistency is no test of truth or of value, and to confirm this claim he refers to the familiar mathematical classes of negative and irrational numbers, to which modern mathematics has so largely added. The whole science of economics is founded on the fiction that man is a calculating animal governed by considerations of material advantage. Similar examples lead Vaihinger to characterize all fields of human thought and study as based on indispensable fictions. "Our conception of the world is an enormous web of fictions, full of logical contradictions." He asserts that if one separates reality from all the fictions on which we depend, nothing is left but an aggregate of sensual impressions. Truth and knowledge are, therefore, illusions, but the concepts which furnish the mind and are its instruments are vitally necessary. While we cannot know truth we can always know that knowledge is intrinsically untrue.

Is Tangible Extension Alone Real?

The roots of this attitude go back to the ancient conviction that tangible reality extended in space is, after all, the only genuine reality. True concepts should be exact copies, simplified images of things existing in space. As the truth of a geometrical diagram's symbols can be tested by observing whether or not they coincide with those of the extended body from which they are copied, so any concept should fit precisely the model on which it is based. If such a reality is the only authentic one then, of course, most concepts do not respond to this test and they are therefore fictions. So far as the principle of consistency is founded on comparisons of position in a continuous and unique space, the arts and sciences are deeply penetrated and disrupted by radical contradictions and they, too, are but tissues of fiction. Truth must obviously serve rather than obstruct life, but to prove that point hardly makes it necessary to qualify any approximation to the truth as a fiction. Again, to assert that life is its own end is a thesis which can hardly be regarded as alone immune from condemnation as a fiction.

Millions of Greeks, and other races also, satisfied the immediate purposes of life without seeing or knowing that the *Hermes* of Praxiteles ever existed. A large number of the greatest works of Greek art are irretrievably lost, counting only those to which we have written references, and the number that must once have existed but of which there is now no word nor trace are for us as if they had never been. Art, therefore, consisting of specific objects determined by position in space, is not an essential without which life cannot exist. The animals, not to mention more elementary forms of life, quite certainly carry on and satisfy the purpose of keeping alive at the highest level of which they are capable without being aware of any art object whatever.

Tested through a point by point comparison, the *Hermes* is not a copy of any real being; the material in which it is embodied makes such a test impossible, for one thing. It is an illusion so far as it does not conform to any reality extended in space. If it is an illusion, it is one of the most precious known to man, but so far as being alive is concerned, life occurs in nearly all cases without any such illusion, and seems entirely capable of existing without it.

Konrad Lange developed the principle of essential fiction with particular reference to aesthetics, and he is known for his book, *Das Wesen der Kunst*. According to him, the essence of art consists in illusion, a conscious self-deception. Its aim is to impart a feeling of freedom from reality. Like many pragmatists, he bases his philosophy on a mystical biology which is practically unknown to the systematic doctrine of scientists engaged in that field of knowledge. Good art, he claims, is that which contributes to the preservation of the race; he goes so far as to postulate a definite racial aesthetic instinct. It is worth while to reproduce the summary of this theory which Lange gives at the end of his book for it is typical of a large group of similar thinkers.

"Art," he defines, "is that activity of man, through which he procures for himself and others a pleasure free from practical interest, based on conscious self-deception and thereby unconsciously supplements the deficiencies in human sensuous experience, and contributes to the broadening and deepening of the sensuous, ethical and intellectual being of mankind."

The safeguarding clauses at the end of his definition do not, it seems, protect his theory from the attacks which they aim to ward off. For one thing, the aesthetic instinct which he postulates is ultimately no more serviceable than the innate art-sense of earlier English writers on aesthetics. It is impossible to prove that man has an innate need of illusion either in art or elsewhere. If he had, many other things, such as magic and medicine, satisfy that purpose so much more efficiently that it is difficult to see how art could ever have emerged into existence.

In any genuine sense, the opposition between works of art and reality is unfounded, and detrimental when it is carried to the point where the former are termed essentially illusions. Both the art work and its effect on the observer share in the same world of time and space, so that the hour and site of any aesthetic experience can, with very little trouble, be ascertained. To be aware of the fact that a work of art is presented to our attention is a prerequisite of the aesthetic situation. The objective and the subjective moments are both present in the aesthetic experience.

Perhaps it is permissible, although misleading, for a poet like Nietzsche to push the distinction between form and feeling to an excess. We may be pleased with his belief that in music feeling is unhampered by form. But this thought is true only to the extent that it does not have a tangible form that can be touched with the hands, like the *Hermes*. It is not the fact that the surface of a painting can be touched with the fingers which constitutes its chief difference from music. And in any case music has its own forms and must have shape to be music. But it is another matter when serious, professional philosophers accept similar distinctions as mutually destructive oppositions, ending in the extinction either of art or the external world.

Illusion in Elie Faure

Another recent writer on art, in whom the principle of illusion dominates, is the critic Elie Faure, whose popularity has been notable, especially in the United States. He carries on a tradition present in the symbolists and decadents at the end of the nineteenth century, but he applies it to contemporary as well as to past art.

After producing a history of art in four volumes, Faure completed the work by adding another which he called

L'Ésprit des Formes, a sort of summary of his imaginative paraphrase of art history, for that is what his four volumes really are, rather than sober history. Like the theatre of Maeterlinck, his fifth volume is dominated by the note of illusion, valued as the essence of art.

He declares that the character of art makes all definitions incomplete, but that art, which is our reason for being, will not end except with us. The world is the artistic creation, the illusion, produced by an irrational artist. "God is a child who amuses himself, passes from laughter to tears without motives and invents the world anew every day for the torment of the abstractors of quintessence, of pedants and preachers who attempt to teach him his trade of creation." The great dilemma of mankind is a choice between illusions. "The adventure of mankind is a continual oscillation between an insatiable desire to become an intelligent animal and to remain a confused god." A confusion of materials derived from opposed sources is evident in Faure's statement that: "History, religion, civilization, the conquest of the universe by man, his pathetic creation of God, all this is nothing but poetry, that is, the incorporation of matter in spirit which makes him and which he remakes himself and transfigures in a continuous exchange." The goal of illusion is an unreal unity, according to Faure, since; "It is the poet—and only the poet, if one accords this title also to those who work with force either in ideas or actions—who finds the analogies, orders values in hierarchies, and discovers the passages leading to unity. There is nothing which lyricism does not resolve into an accord and elevate with itself. And if it wishes, morality too, which it enchains while playing with it. Outside lyricism there is nothing but slavery."

The clearest statements, revealing his fundamental attitude toward art, are to be found in his final chapter on "The Employment of Death." "Art," he declares, "is the only thing that does not expect anything of life but life itself, nor looks for recompense elsewhere than in its own exercise, or, in the last analysis, in death. . . . Posthumous fame is an inadequate compensation. . . . Physical creation, like artistic creation, serves only to nourish death. . . . Every great work provides a sentiment of enthusiastic security, which affirms the accord of the evolving spirit of man with some fugitive appearance fixed for eternity. . . . This illusion, which constitutes the object of our love and the end that we think it, is only a phantom to be sure, a pretext if you wish, but it is the most necessary of all. . . . This illusion leads us to the only reality, and I understand by that the energy which drives us to seek our love in order to exhaust it to the bottom. . . . Man can choose only between suicide and effort: the superior utility of art is to give to this effort an enthusiasm of which morality deprives it, and of replacing idleness with a living heart in the breast of the dead. The purpose of art is to secure our consent to life, for the intoxication which it gives is conditioned by its horror. . . . However terrible life may be, the existence of the creative activity, without other end than itself, suffices to justify it. Play, evidently, seems at first sight the least useful of our actions, but it becomes the most useful as soon as we observe that it multiplies our fervor in living and makes us forget death."

In an autobiographical article published in *The Dial,* the grounds of Faure's personal disillusion, his acceptance of art as a saving illusion from the destructive deceptions of the external world, are made obvious. Speaking of his early years in Paris, when he first saw something of the painting of Cézanne, he says: "Unfortunately, one did not see anything of his elsewhere, particularly if one were a poor medical student, without connexions among writers or artists, timid moreover, almost wild, and in any case very lonely." His experiences at the time confirmed him in his pessimism, in which he was consoled by art. "Between 1894 and 1900, eclipse. I saw hardly any painting. One year of military service. Five years of medical studies. Married, very young. Children. Boredom. Sickness. Death. Suffering. A precocious education in responsibility and unhappiness. A profound upheaval of my inner world, at the very moment when the Dreyfus affair was engrossing people's minds and making revelations to those who wanted to take the trouble to meditate upon the existence of two sections of humanity, each perhaps impenetrable to the other. This period appears to me as the most dramatic of my thought and life. Also the most decisive. Tragedy in the house. Tragedy in the street."

From the point of view of the trained historian, Faure's books are not history at all. They are a poetic paraphrase on a sequence of facts uncertainly apprehended and frequently misunderstood. He began as a popular lecturer before evening groups of working men, an experience in which he neither gained ideas of method nor benefited by the criticism of fellow-students. Many of his conclusions rest upon generalizations which are historically false, the analogies which he perceives are often the products of an uninformed fancy. Faure's flight from reality and his pessimism, for which art offers a balm, reject even the qualified sort of truth accessible on the human level.

It is the doctrine of illusion, of timid and self-pitying disillusion which, more than the older Puritan objections to art, has led to a merely conventional approval of established masterpieces and hostility toward really contemporary art on the part of many intelligent, thoughtful people today. In a world where the good is achieved only through effort and contending with obstacles, deceit and the deliberate creation of what is untrue as an evasion from the responsibility which existence imposes are deeply repulsive to an active conscience. To admire what is illusion because it is such, seems a species of devil-worship. To find consolation for disillusion through the deliberate cultivation of illusion, instead of attempting to perform good acts, appears to be a betrayal of the ethical foundations of rational human existence. It is not modern art itself, then, so much as the words of critics like Faure, which provoke antagonism among ethical idealists.

The defects of illusion as an explanation of art have been stated by Santayana who, apart from his superficial psychological materialism, retains much Platonic idealism both in aesthetics and ethics. He writes: "A refined mind finds as little happiness in love without friendship as in sensuality without love; it may succumb to both, but it accepts neither. What is true of mere sensibility is no less true of mere fancy. Any absolute work of art which serves no further purpose than to stimulate an emotion has about it a certain luxurious and visionary taint. We leave it with a blank mind, and a pang bubbles up from the very fountain of pleasures. Art, so long as it needs to be a dream, will never cease to be a disappointment. Its facile cruelty, its narcotic abstraction, can never sweeten the evils we return to at home; it can liberate half the mind only by leaving the other half in abeyance."

The Art of Marc Chagall as a Justification of Illusion

The art of Marc Chagall may be cited as a body of modernistic productions which, if indeed art, serve to justify the theory of illusion as the real explanation of art. The painting entitled, *"I and the Village"* is a characteristic work, painted in 1911, now in a collection at Brussels. At the right, in profile, is a human face opposite to a horse's head, also in profile. The mouth and nose of the man's face, the muzzle of the horse and a tuft of flowers held in the man's hands, which appear just above the lower frame, are inscribed in a circle occupying the lower portion of the picture space. Superimposed on the horse's cheek is a cow that is being milked by a woman. In the space between the horse's eyes and the man's is a peasant carrying a scythe, and opposite him is a woman who appears to be falling through the air. A curving plane extends from the lower left-hand corner of the picture, cuts through the circle already mentioned, and becomes the hill or field across which the peasant strides. Above the edge of the hill projects a row of buildings. Two of them, above the falling woman, are inverted, while out of a door or window in the church looms the face of a priest, a third as large as the church tower itself. Obviously, although many of the objects or forms depicted can be thus identified, their relations and shapes are not those which we find in traditional painting. There is a dreamlike quality about this sort of work; the principle of illusion is clearly present.

Thus Christian Zervos, writing of Marc Chagall, says: "Some artists exhaust the field of what is possible. Others base their thought upon a close relation between dream and reality. They suspect that there are things which the ordinary man does not notice and which he does not even imagine. Madness, said Suares, is the dream of a single individual. Imagination is the possibility, for thought, of going outside the immediate. As a man, Tiresias could remember that he had been a woman. In him flourished the ideas of a man and the exquisite delicacy of a woman. He could recover in his spirit all the thoughts and all the emotions that there are, penetrate with a special vision those relations which escape the ordinary man. He had the gift of prophecy. He was a poet. But the public is not very much at ease with poets. It accepts nothing but the senses as agents for the transmission of knowledge. Nevertheless all combinations are probable. Above all those which seem to us impossible. Man, after all, is only 'the dream of a man.' "

Waldemar George has observed of Chagall: "Does the external world exist for him? Certainly. But instead of experiencing it as a passive spectator, in place of registering optical sensations, he does not perceive it except through the lenses of his internal life, the mirror which is of all most deforming. Chagall is not content with making geometry or reconstituting things. He utilizes them for lyric and dramatic purposes."

The art of Chagall, then, does not give us so much a duplication of normal and conventional visible appearance as a vision of something more stimulating and exciting. In that respect, it is nearer to the *Hermes* of Praxiteles than it is to the artisan who contrives the figures in a wax-works exhibition. There is something dreamlike about both the Greek statue and the Russian painting. Both objectify what is felt to be tangibly unreal, making the normally invisible visible and fixing the fluctuating. The modern work by its presentation on canvas of the confused, interpenetrating images seen in dreams, and, for that matter, less vividly in the normal stream of consciousness, gives them a greater permanence and diminishes their terrifying elusiveness. To be sure, works like those of Chagall and those of El Greco, which respond intimately to a vision of the world prevalent in the day of their creation, are not able to retain their quality as beautiful and revealing, like works of the classical moment in antiquity, since they rely on emotions dependent upon and related to the flowing stream of time rather than upon the fixed and stable relations of things extended in the unity and permanence of space. It may be supposed justly that only when a subsequent age itself contains elements similar to those dominating in the time when an earlier work was created, it is able to perceive beauty in expressionistic works from a previous phase of culture.

If the genuineness of artistic visions is to be certified by the pragmatic test of their fruits, as some classicists indicate, we might affirm that classical art was a false illusion, for it rested upon slavery and military conquest. We could assert, too, that such art as Chagall's betrays the presence of a false illusion because it rests upon the cultural derivativeness of his race and the social chaos of his country. In other words, externally applied this test can prove indifferently the falsity of any artist's work. Internally applied, we can say that both are truly art on the ground that they respond more or less adequately to temporary satisfactions which the artists of their times and places were able to create.

The images and visions that float before the mind are just as remote or just as near as our sensations of external reality, Locke pointed out. The newspapers that we hold in our hands are no more and no less real than the images of imagination, created or remembered in the mind, as we read, and made external for capable contemplation by the artist. But a mood of disillusion may accompany the realization that we cannot by an act of pure will summon a newspaper into our hands as we can visualize Chagall's canvases, recall our own dreams, or repeat remembered poems. If we agree with Vaihinger that our world is a tissue of necessary fictions, there is something nearer reality perhaps in an artistic fiction acknowledged to be such than in a mathematical law which pretends to be true everywhere and for all eternity. Indeed, subjective and visionary art may be considered objective evidence of man's need of self-deception. With Faure we may go so far as to believe that aesthetic creation for its own sake, and an acceptance of the world as in essence an artistic product with no other end than itself, "multiplies our fervor in living and makes us forget death." Through the joyous illusion of art we are enabled to ignore the tragic illusion of life.

The Art of Mantegna as a Refutation of Illusion

An examination of the works of Mantegna, especially the frescoes in the Eremitani Chapel at Padua, and an analysis of the sort of illusion there sought and attained may, however, modify our inclination to accept illusion as the explanation of art, which we might be tempted to do on the basis of what we see in Chagall. Mantegna was one of the foremost artists of the early Renaissance, and was alone judged worthy by Giovanni Santi among his own contemporaries to be ranked with the great masters of antiquity. Donatello had prepared the ground for a thorough-going attempt to carry out in painting the absorbing interest of the period, which was an effort to master nature. The undertaking was not only to control tangible existence for human needs as the popular mind conceives the end of science today, but to understand reality as it is, rather than as we dream or pretend it to be. Instead of being passionate animals at the mercy of the external world, we should be able as intelligent men to overcome the world by understanding it truly. As far as painting was concerned, Mantegna achieved that aim with varying degrees of success. He did so in several respects: through emphasizing the plastic roundness of things, of the human figure in particular; through studious analysis and copying of ancient works of art; through a careful investigation of how the optical phenomena from which we derive a sense of space may be represented on a two dimensional plane; and through a more romantic trend in his color than was to be found in most of the naturalistically inclined Florentines.

In the Eremitani frescoes the scene is set as on a stage, and the parallel perspective goes back indeed to the tradition of Roman stage decoration. The figures are arranged with due consideration of dramatic action yet consistent with Roman dignity and the static quality of a painted representation; the attitudes and grouping of the figures are reinforced by the majestic architectural surroundings, the back plane parallel to the picture surface being composed of large imposing masses, quite free, however, from any taint of theatrical artifice. The scene where the saint stands before his judge is one which illustrates all these points.

In most of the frescoes there are large figures in the foreground where the principal action takes place. The chief device for carrying out his naturalistic aim, his realistic purpose of reproducing in painting the exact phenomena presented to the eye, is his sharp emphasis on perspective; the retreating lines which rush together toward the disappearing point are carefully and scientifically elaborated and the figures assume appropriate proportions within the limits determined by these lines. This requires that his color be subordinated to his linear contours, yet in his clear geometrical vision of spatial reality he neglects aerial perspective, the modification of contour and hue through atmosphere. He accurately reduces the proportions of figures in the distance but retains their precision of linear detail and employs for them the same system of chiaroscuro as in the foreground figures. His interest was first of all to understand and control the representation of form in terms of perspective and composition.

Perhaps the most striking of the series is that depicting St. James just before he is taken to the place of execution. At the left, beneath one vault of a triumphal arch, the executioner kneels at the feet of the saint, imploring his blessing, while at the right a guard pushes away the crowd. The main difference from the other frescoes of the series is this: whereas they represent the scene in the customary manner which we see in painted drop-curtains of street scenes, with the disappearing point in the middle of the plane of representation and just below the geometrical center, the fresco in question has the disappearing point below the frame and a little to the right of the center. The effect is that obtained when one looks at a group that stands on a level above the eye. The perspective of the inside of the offered vault and of the cornice of the building at the right of the picture is amazing as it descends toward the focal point. It is almost as much a *tour de force* as Mantegna's celebrated *Pietá* in the Brera at Milan, where the body of Christ is seen feet first, with violent foreshortening, or the ceiling of the Camera degli Sposi at Mantua, which was the inspiration for Correggio's whirling gusts of ascending angels.

It may be urged that the work of Mantegna exhibits illusion in various senses and that illusion is a basic principle which explains the beauty of his paintings. There is, for example, the duplication of certain optical phenomena, carried out in an exact manner by geometrical projection. Because of it we have a sensation of looking into deep space, a feeling heightened by the plastic rendering of the figures within that space. We are also gazing at scenes from a civilization no longer actually existing; the completeness and accuracy with which the events and places are portrayed makes us afterwards almost believe that we have gazed on ancient Rome although Rome has disappeared centuries ago.

Again, our faith in religion and our admiration for the holiness of the saint might be confirmed by such a vivid representation of what could otherwise be a vague and remote legend. If the popular trust in what we read is justified, a belief in what we see, even as it is shown us through the illusions of art, is probably even more persuasive. As has already been noted, inherited and developed technique making possible such imitation of reality, never ceased to amaze men in antiquity. They were not so much impressed by the theoretical difficulties of imitation in explaining art, as they were by the almost miraculous fact that men could imitate reality at all.

Few of us could visualize antiquity with such fullness, unaided by the artist. Dignity, courage, devotion to the truth, self-sacrifice for a purpose higher than the individual, are all abstract things which are comparatively rare in daily life, or, if present, are difficult to perceive. But Mantegna gives us a definite communication of those qualities in the career of St. James as he depicts it. The courage of the saint was an imitation of the eternal idea in God, and the communication of that quality by Mantegna through a representation of the apostle is thrice removed from the abiding reality, according to Plato. Disturbing as it was, however, to the philosopher, we can appreciate the saint's courage more readily in Mantegna's work than we probably could if we had happened to be members of the street crowd that witnessed the ordeal.

Yet there has often existed a firm conviction that all genuine reality is orderly, lawful, regulated by a divine dispensation; and that, furthermore, the innately reasonable order of the external world is not a closed mystery to man, but one which can be penetrated and mastered by the direct activity of human reason. The mathematical principles of perspective could be and were evolved, so that things near and far need not be scattered about according to the narrative or decorative intention found in primitive art. They are disposed according to definite rules which roughly approximate the experience of the single eye viewing objects in space. Thus Mantegna's products are those of a rational science, like the art works of most other great artists of the early Renaissance. A belief was profoundly adhered to that exact knowledge of the external and objective laws governing physical reality could be achieved by patient human analysis, and when apprehended, they could be employed in the achievement of beauty itself. There was nothing pessimistic in this doctrine. Rational proportions, symmetry, harmony, and the other qualities associated with classical art are characteristic of external reality and reducible to principles, if not to mathematical formulas. An emphasis on these qualities prevails in significant products of the whole period.

Although it is not likely we should immediately conclude from these works that the artists who made decorative and scientific studies like the battle-pieces of Uccello were inspired by an emotional fervor as intense as that of Chinese mystics or of Chagall, we know from literary evidence that many of them were. But it is the reliance upon the classical, objective properties of the beautiful that imparts to their work a permanent ease of communicability which subjective and definitely illogical paintings like those of Chagall do not possess. It is not a musical impression of tragic impermanence that charms us in Mantegna, but a reassuring and calm asserting of the durable, persistent fact of beauty.

Peace and trust in the world were not, however, a public fact in the Italy of Mantegna's day; to a large extent the objectification of classical serenity in the architectural settings of Mantegna's frescoes and the statuesque pose of his figures did not imitate the actualities of the age. In that sense, it may be held, he satisfied his audience with illusions. But their longing for peace was as much a reality in that day as the cold walls on which Mantegna painted; dignity and human confidence in reason and right were attainable at times and by some persons; Mantegna was appreciated and highly esteemed; his works definitely affected artistic valuations and production in Italy after he had evolved his style. Thus beauty in and through Mantegna's production was not a subjective illusion pertinent only to the fancy of Mantegna, but a social phenomenon also, whose extent and consequences are ascertainable.

But an error thoroughly saturated most heirs of ancient culture; namely, that what is touched is most real, and compared with that reality, even the reports of the eyes are illusions and unreal. We know quite surely that a man a hundred feet away from us is not a mere fraction of the height of a man six feet away. Yet he looks to be much smaller; accurate and scientific perspective enables us to represent something corresponding to this difference in a regular and systematic manner. If we felt and measured the bodies of the two men we are convinced that we should find no such discrepancy as our eyes inform us of, and as perspective enables us to imitate.

It seems, moreover, a logical mistake to suppose that the average and the routine is exclusively true. Beauty, clearly and sharply perceived only through art and most surely in art objects and therefore relatively rare, would, for that reason, be untrue. It is hardly rational to declare that because one is unutterably bored with the trivial round of life in a small German university town, that its music, which is often far from trivial, must be unreal and an illusion. It will scarcely do to found a whole explanation of art on the proposition that what is joyous is unreal because it is unusual.

Other reasons for Mantegna's activity and the satisfactions which it afforded men of his own time are more plausible than the view that they all had an innate need of self-deception. As sermons are more efficient than paintings in stimulating men to virtue, so superstition is a readier outlet for those who demand lies to soothe their souls. The men of the Renaissance were not like those of the late Middle Ages, oppressed with the fear of death and continually brooding over what happens after death. It is one of the distinctions of the period that these men of the awakening recovered confidence in the dignity of the individual and the capacity of the rational faculty to meet all the contingencies of physical existence, because the world is not a tissue of hazard and unaccountable chance, but an orderly structure, obedient to law, and that order is ascertainable by human intellect. The world is not an illusion, death is not the final reality for men, Mantegna could discover how to control the complex facts of vision and use that knowledge for the communication of beauty. The assurance that the world is, and is rational, multiplied the fervor of Renaissance men in living, and they did not need to brood on death, for they indeed possessed abundant life. Their youthful confidence was justified by the richness of their achievement.

Pollaiuolo's Battle of Naked Men

Antonio Pollaiuolo, born soon after Mantegna, was a painter, a goldsmith, a sculptor as well as an engraver. He shared in the restrained realism which characterized Donatello and Masaccio, and the scientific enthusiasm of Uccello. His famous print, the *Battle of Naked Men,* reflects his knowledge of the structure and movements of the human body, gained through the dissection of cadavers, a phase of his quest for objective knowledge which was to affect Signorelli and Michelangelo most conspicuously. The technique of this print is, in addition, similar to that employed in Mantegna's engravings.

To the modern eye, recalling the naturalism of more recent artists, from Ribera to Courbet, Pollaiuolo's work seems to be distinguished less by naturalism than by its decorative balance and rhythm. The figures are arranged near the foreground in three or four parallel planes, and the background behind them all is a wood or thicket with the vegetation arranged in a loose pattern which, however, reminds one of the close covered surface of a tapestry rather than a frankly naturalistic study of trees and leaves.

The strained, muscular figures seem to have been caught in the balanced and consciously graceful attitudes of a dance movement, and the figures are disposed with regard to a scheme of composition which affords a definite unity together with a lively variety.

The small dimensions of the print, to begin with, offer far less opportunity than a large-sized fresco for any element of deceptive illusion. The fact that there are only two colors present, the color of the paper and the color of the ink impressed on it, diminishes still further the possible misapprehension that the print copies exactly anything ever seen in nature.

In this print we have very emphatically represented a struggle of human bodies, intent on exterminating one another, so that here we find a clear example of aggressive and active will in action. This print, however, to interpret the doctrine of Schopenhauer's will on its lowest level, can scarcely quell or provide a substitute for our homicidal impulses. The composition presents a group which is possible, stated in terms of line; which displays what is probable in the muscular balances and stresses of fighting men. To fight and to kill is a repulsive and terrible activity on the part of human beings, and the circumstance that in the print such a theme becomes beautiful may indicate that either the beauty of fighting men or the horror of combat is an illusion. But the making of a print and the admiration of it are as much human and pleasant activities as fighting, and these activities are not horrible. The horror of fighting is, then, in experience a real and proper thing, and the beauty of Pollaiuolo's print does not depend upon the horror or the love of actual battle. Nor does it inspire the normal observer to become a gangster.

That the print is, after all, only a little piece of paper with some lines printed on it, does not make its beauty unreal or trivial because of the lack of intrinsic beauty or value of old paper. The value added to the medium is produced by a man who was at the same time an artist, sustained by the understanding admiration of those men who came with and after him.

Against the point of view urged by extreme naturalism, we may say this print is not naturalistic. Against the philistine point of view, we can urge that the poverty of the materials does not demean the dignity of the art product. Against the misanthrope, we perceive that the struggle of the will is not essentially abolished by contemplation of this print; nor is the beauty to be seen here, because of its rarity when compared with the innumerable annoyances that rasp too tender nerves, an illusion. It would seem, indeed, in spite of the evidence furnished by subjective art such as Chagall's, that Mantegna's frescoes go far to prove that illusion is not a conclusive or comprehensive meaning of art. Pollaiuolo's print belongs to a class of art objects which are as far from duplicating our normal vision of reality as the painting of Chagall.

Among art works, prints are probably the most frequent, and their beauty cannot be defined exclusively in terms of the illusions they provide. But if art is not illusion; if beauty, after all, is known through things, does the manipulation of the material constitute what is real in art? Can technique be its meaning?

CHAPTER VII

IS TECHNIQUE THE MEANING OF ART?

Whether or not they believe that illusion is the essence of art, it is common for those who are acquainted with the processes and materials of some art to ignore the theoretical implications of the situation and limit discussion to the observed phenomena. Impatience with the generalities of theory, and the difficulty of harmonizing theoretical principles with facts of such diverse nature as those comprehended under the concept of art, lead to a feeling that mental effort in a speculative direction is better avoided, and more satisfactory results are to be had from concentrated attention to the ways and means of art.

Practically all who think about art are obliged to consider technique and medium, even the most idealistic must make some place for these factors and account for them in some fashion, but the number of those who quite frankly restrict the theory of art to technique and medium, excluding all others, is comparatively small. In accordance with our plan of analyzing each important meaning attributed to art on its own merits, it is nevertheless necessary to examine this principle by itself, the better to understand its value and function as a principle by which art can be explained.

Imitation in its popular form can be stigmatized as the plaster-cast theory, and illusion termed the narcotic principle; thus, the meaning of art as technique and medium might be called the carpenter's or the cosmetic theory, depending on which aspect is emphasized. In either case, this view holds that beauty in art is due to a successful result in the manipulation of a medium. The material is efficiently exploited.

As Ogden, Richards, and Wood point out, technique and medium as a principle can be harmoniously combined with various psychologies and abstract theories of art. Marriott is one of those who have most definitely stated an exclusive theory of the type now under consideration. He illustrates it by citing such examples as the ordinary Latin cross in contrast to the Celtic cross. The difference in form is, he claims, specifically due to the difference in materials employed. The ordinary cross made of wood or metal assumes its familar shape because the materials will permit this form, but in stone the circle enclosing the crossing must be added and the projection of the arms limited because the nature of the material demands it. The beauty of the design in these cases is not determined by any factors beyond those inherent in the material employed by human workmanship.

Art the Characteristic Use of Materials

From such observation, Marriott feels justified in declaring: "Art is primarily the characteristic use of materials, and the representation of nature and the direct action of design are both incidental to that. . . . The transference of emotion is a consequence rather than an aim, and aesthetic appreciation is mainly an aesthetic response, not necessarily conscious, to the characteristic use of tools and materials."

Such factors as the obvious difference in the quality and character of the washes in water-color and the brush strokes in oil painting lead him to say that, "for our full aesthetic satisfaction, any form of nature must be adapted to the material in which it is represented and to the convenience of the hand in using that material." In this he finds himself in accord with Ruskin, who combined the imitation theory with that of technique. The latter declared that: "In every branch of art, only so much imitation is to be admitted as is consistent with the ease of the workman and the capacities of the material."

Marriott thus emphasizes the material factor, and of technique he says that "the function of craft is not creative but transmissive or limiting." To establish this, he refers to the large number of people who have a keen aesthetic sensibility, and ideas that are original and creative, but since they lack the capacity of craftsmanship which is an essential condition of art, their imagination is sterile.

A great advantage of this point of view is that it usually limits the field of inquiry within fairly definite boundaries and gains a plausible consistency and practicality in that manner. It proceeds from the known to the unknown, by an inventory of the known facts and establishing through them a sequence according to chronology and geography. By restricting its field primarily to shape, and leaving questions of content to the caprice or fancy of the individual, this theory feels that it is a workable attitude toward art, that it gets the best results by dealing only with what can be dealt with in objective terms of time and space. It is, therefore, the theory which profits by attempting to treat what is really tractable in art. Whatever the content may be, and it may vary with every hour of the day for the individual, and is certain to alter for the race in the course of time, the form is relatively fixed and definite, the material in which the art object is formed remains constant. The external aspects of the art object, because it is an object, are independent of the individual appreciation of them, and they may be analyzed in terms which can be universally communicated and understood.

It is argued, too, that an understanding of technique does not bar the way to enjoyment of art. Instead of destroying our capacity to enjoy singing, some knowledge of the process by which a singer produces song gives objective criteria in judging the result, adds interest and variety to our experience. Because each of the several arts has its own equipment of appropriate materials and developed technique, the critic as well as the creator attain an understanding of what is possible in art, within the limitations imposed by the medium, which it is folly to attempt to transcend. It is unfair, to say the least, to pass judgment upon the artist because he has failed to do what is impossible, given the materials with which he works. This point of view is particularly useful in the appreciation of music and the drama, where the performer does not invent the composition which he reproduces, but interprets or represents another's idea, and the actors or musicians, viewed as the material agents with which the composer or playwright immediately deals, can be judged as such objectively. The same principle held good when poetry was read aloud or declaimed from memory, as it invariably was before the invention of printing.

Technique Replaces Metaphysics

In this formula, the factor of technique takes the place occupied by metaphysical elements in some of the other meanings attached to art. If we accept the distinction, necessary to escape the naïve theory of imitation, between the beauty of art and the beauty of nature, technique becomes of great theoretical weight. As already pointed out, if the beauty of nature is prior to and more real than that of art, the relation between the two is an imperfect copy on the part of art. But if we decide that beauty is for us a human perception, in order of time first achieved through objects of human manufacture, and that beauty is then read back into nature as providing a potential work of art, the methods whereby art works are produced and through which, or in which, beauty is perceived are of exceptional significance.

Technique is the connecting link between the preconceived goal of the artist and the raw materials which he manipulates. It is the distinction between the creative imagination of most sensitive people, and creative imagination that actually creates because it brings forth things made by the artist that satisfy the imagination of others beside the artist. Emphasis on this factor brings an element of normality, of sound balance into the artistic nature. It is the will to create at work and in action, rather than a vague longing to contemplate the objectification of one's aesthetic imagination, without the exercise of technical training and the patience needed to acquire it. Des Esseintes, the decadent hero of Huysman's novel, whose imagination exceeded the possibilities of any material, was lacking in technique or at least the will to produce. His visions were so inexpressibly lovely that they could only be injured by being reduced to concrete form in words. Finally, he took to dreaming his works of art. He logically concluded that since his works of art were intended only to satisfy himself and he could never embody the fullness of his imagination, with all its intense but incommunicable delicacies and associations, in objects of art, the mental image by itself sufficed. For him technique was unnecessary and a hindrance to the aesthetic enjoyment of his own creations. When he reached that stage, the end was near.

Technique, therefore, makes all the difference between day-dreaming and artistic creation. It is an outrage to honest thought to term artistic imagination vision unless it is conceived in terms possible to a mastered technique and a possible material. Artistic vision which lacks such constituent elements is not an insight into the real, a probable segment of the possible, but an unreal image floating before the mind, and insofar as it is a dream, it is a human mistake, an error in judgment.

It is to be noted, furthermore, that the great revolutions in art and the contributions of the great artists to whom credit for accomplishing such a feat is due, have been distinguished by technical innovations. Here again, a valid criterion for separating the merely fashionable or popular from the artists who are genuine discoverers, is to be found in their response to the demand for technical novelty corresponding to their novelty in style and their influence upon subsequent artists who adopt the previously unpracticed technical elements so introduced. Thus Michelangelo's regard for the cubic, three-dimensional form of the block of stone led him to technical discoveries in how to attain the maximum variety of movement within the minimum volume, and his example has been instructive to all sculptors afterward. Monet's perception of external nature as a luminous curtain of colored spots led him to a more consistent and thorough-going study and practice of the means whereby in painting, as the placing of spots of colored pigment on the two-dimensional surface of the canvas, similar optical phenomena might be produced, and his results constituted a great technical change.

The interest of artists themselves has usually been concentrated on technique. The mechanical problem of how to paint has engaged them, the methods and procedure of artists whose work they admire have always furnished a topic of absorbing importance. Art students often seem to think that in order to duplicate the success and ability of their teacher, all that is really necessary is to acquire his technique by observation, study, and remembering certain mysterious studio secrets to be imparted by word of mouth. In what they have written, artists usually dwell at length on such topics; the earlier art literature consists almost exclusively of technical data. Even when art history, and later still, art criticism, make their tardy appearance, we find, for example in Vasari, that technical methods and innovations are subjects to which keen attention is devoted. Since the nineteenth century, with the disappearance of the workshop tradition and discipline, leaving the artist to discover as best he may principles and practices that formerly were trade practices or standard and uniform doctrines, artists have more often than not engaged in ceaseless variations of technique. It has been hoped that by new and different procedures, advances might be realized in the aesthetic aims of the art, and while reactionary artists are often blamed for attaining technical proficiency but lagging behind in their artistic ideals, it is not at all improbable that radical and independent artists have often concentrated on technique, achieving novelties without any marked contribution to progress in art. Thus technique in itself is not a field in which either reactionaries or radicals have a monopoly of interest and error.

From the pedagogical point of view, it is a source of strength and precision to concentrate on technique. It is probable that just as any normal person can be taught to read and write, so the simpler elements of artistic technique can be imparted to anybody who wishes to acquire them. Aesthetic achievement, appreciation of aesthetic values and original creative power in exceptional degree are apparently matters beyond the best will of teachers or docile students. No teacher can guarantee that any student will be successful in the struggle to surpass his fellows in the social and economic sense. It is impossible to assure the most eager student that he will find a high place in the history of art, that he will be recognized as a brilliant creator, or that he will reap the rewards which have been enjoyed by eminent artists. But technique is the one thing that can be taught. What materials to use, and the sequence of manual acts in using them, is something whose concepts can be implanted in another mind, and placed within the student's control through patient and persistent practice.

It was the impressionist movement in the nineteenth century whose divergence in technique from conventional practices brought critical attention also to a consideration of the importance of technique. In its present stage, as itself an accepted and almost academic body of color principles and their application, what cost the innovators much thought and effort can be acquired and manipulated by any willing student within a few years. The art of Manet and the renewed interest in Velazquez and Hals attracted study to their technical methods, and in such works as that of R. A. M. Stevenson on Velazquez much space is given to an analysis of the methods employed, and to an elaborate justification of such a discussion in a critical study of artists' achievement. In recent years, the new movements in painting have involved, in their typical course, elaborate consideration of technique and a metaphysical justification, in many cases quite irrelevant or quite out of proportion to the works produced.

In the earlier literature of painting, ranging from Cennino to Da Vinci, it is impossible to separate technical observations from the critical, for both are combined, with considerations of technique predominating. It is possible to extricate the theoretical ideas present or implied in the technical discussions, but genuine art criticism, in which the broader and more philosophic aspects of the subject matter are prominent, developed for its own sake, is something that remained for a later generation.

Knowledge of the Medium

Technique may be said to consist of a knowledge of the medium and its behavior. The architect must know the physical characteristics of the material of which an arch is built. The sculptor must understand how the differences in material between bronze and marble affect the free detachment of standing figures. From the artist's immediate point of view, technique consists further in a knowledge of the tools used in dealing with the material, and in a practiced control of those instruments of his craft. The closest correlation between eye and hand is required, together with an habitual and almost unconscious manual dexterity. As this dexterity is acquired, and the artist grows older, or a harmonious equilibrium of technique and purpose is attained, his technical habits develop such set patterns that it almost seems as if works of art grew under his hands without the conscious volition of the artist. At any rate the technical struggles of youth have been overcome. It becomes increasingly more difficult for the artist to change his manner of production. His artistic creations are signed and to be identified by his individual peculiarities, developed through the course of years. What he has painted or drawn can be as definitely identified in many cases as what he has written, so individually and specifically his do certain objective peculiarities become. It is finally almost impossible for the older artist to alter his motor mechanism so that he can rival the methods and results of more radical and perhaps more popular schools. For himself, however, and those who merely copy his methods, the pattern of vision and expression in which the artist is established may lead also to mannerism, affectation, and uninspired convention.

Thus, in the majority of even significant artists, it is only partially true that the artist works as Michelangelo said, when he spoke of the artist's as *la man che ubbedisce all' inteletto,* the hand which obeys the intellect, for it is more apt to be, it is more probable in normal psychology, that in maturity at least the artist's intellect is usually limited by his hand. To achieve technical dexterity in the first place, a correct, minute adjustment of muscular actions must be present, and this is acquired only with concentrated attention, repeated trials after experience of error, until finally a habit of control is established which, if not quite that anticipated by the student, is at any rate one which is reliable, one which produces results of which the artist and some observers approve, one on which he can count without fear or anxiety. As in ordinary writing, typewriting, or in playing the piano, the motor memory must be so thoroughly drilled that it does its work and demands a minimum conscious stress on the part of the artist. Giotto's circle, the perfect figure which he instantly executed as a proof of his technical ability, is thus not a merely interesting, childish anecdote, but an extreme illustration of the practiced control which every successful artist must and does acquire.

From this point of view, technique, whether established or revolutionary, is the factor that assures some sort of continuity in art production and the study of its objective achievement. What media are to be used in painting, what colors and combinations of color, how they are to be applied and with what instruments, are definite problems to which every student must find an answer and the most probable answer which he will adopt is one developed by some preceding artist whose work he admires or which is generally admired by those to whose approval he is sensitive. The crystal-clear miniatures of Meissonier were executed with a technique which could be and was adopted by thousands of other artists. The technical characteristics of Cézanne, which were in turn based upon a selection of devices used by predecessors and contemporaries, in a combination developed by experience, have been adopted by thousands of artists, so that what was in him a relatively independent and original procedure is now standard practice not only in Paris but in Peru and Palestine as well. Technical continuity is thus necessary and unavoidable in any art, it is what makes rational progress possible, it makes art history, in spite of all the variations and failures of individual exercise, still a coherent and orderly sequence in time, and it gives a justified ground of relative certainty to the artist as well as to the scholar.

The artist, as a psychological type, is probably more suggestible and responsive than the ordinary man. His capacity to absorb technical patterns from others, to apprehend the methods of dealing with a medium and the use of the tools employed, surpasses that of the lay observer. As a productive artist and not simply a lover of art, his admirations and enthusiasms impel him to a creative activity, resulting in objective evidence of what he has admired. In any event a partial success, a compromise with impotence, is essential for the artist. Failure to absorb the procedure of those he admires and to develop such changes as respond to his own experience means defeat in his life as an artist. Mere submission, an undiscriminating repetition of how things have been done before is all that is within the capacity of many artists, but it is at the same time the only condition on which they can be artists at all. Genuine originality may come from a mastered inheritance, but hardly from an exclusive ignorance. It is the means whereby the public can recognize that styles exist and observe changes in style; it makes possible different but coherent levels of public appreciation of what artists produce.

A great advantage of technique as the meaning of art is that it helps to bridge the abyss between the fine arts and daily life, as the repetitious, habitual, and more or less monotonous routine. The objects preserved in museums are for the most part incomprehensible to the people who pass by in the street outside. The lurid and romantic conception of the artist's nature and activity developed in nineteenth century fiction adds a mysterious glamor to this incomprehensibility. If, then, the non-existent mystery is eliminated, and the unfamiliar is presented in familiar terms, by analysis of the technique involved, art becomes a possible resource for daily life and thought.

Anybody can be told enough of the methods and materials in vogue at different times and the effects which are possible or at least practicable in each, to understand what the objects of art are made of and how they came into being in the concrete objects external to the observer and offered to his attention. The social conventions and prevalent standards of a civilization or culture form a more or less consistent body of practical rules for the conduct of life. It is unfortunate and unnecessary that any interest with the superior value possessed by art should not form an integral and familiar part of a coherently organized social existence. But it is chiefly in the nineteenth century with its emphasis on archaeology, on the one hand, and its excessive attachment to the mysterious and the incomprehensible in art precisely because it is mysterious and incomprehensible, on the other, that art may be felt to fail in its function of harmonious social utility.

Technique as a meaning of art, therefore, abolishes the separation between fine art and customary existence by denying that there is any radical or essential difference between fine and applied art. It rejects the distinction between objects of fine art as the useless products of sophisticated activities on the part of painters and sculptors, whose value is purely disinterested, and obviously useful things such as furniture, carpets, and wall-paper, where aesthetic considerations of some sort are present, but where the utility and necessity of the objects as well as their selfish satisfactions are prominent. Such a distinction, this principle claims, is arbitrary or accidental. Architecture and poetry are also fine arts, but it is physically impossible to exhibit examples within the museum and most museum buildings, as a matter of fact, are themselves dismal failures in architecture. Soon after the museums and art schools of the new régime were established in revolutionary France, the idea of teaching how to write poetry was abandoned. On the other hand, it is rather usual to include in our museums objects whose only excuse for being there is that they are excessively rare and expensive, that they have historical or archaeological associations which make them satisfying fodder for public curiosity, or else excellent realizations of successful design in applied art which might also serve as examples or models for designers of present-day useful objects. In this view those who hold the doctrine that excellence in art is determined by ethical tests are at times willing to share. Among them were Ruskin and Morris. Just as a good chair must be what it seems to be, its materials must be what they appear, the design must be beautiful as well, so that it may be truly a chair fulfilling its practical as well as its aesthetic purpose, a painting must be good for the emotional and social purposes which it fills. Thus art and life are not things so radically different in kind that they have no ground in common and do not interpenetrate. Objects of fine art are essentially products of a trained, skillful workman; the artist is an artisan, like the cabinet maker, and by viewing the artist and what he does in this light, the place of art in life is thought to be assured.

The egocentric and subjectively independent modern painter is the logical victim of a mysterious and incomprehensible art. He produces only to satisfy himself, and yet he irrationally expects that a public for whom he professes not to produce will support him by purchasing his products. Contemporary artists express themselves, they do not fill orders, and nevertheless they have to live, as do most people, by supplying goods or services for which there is a market. In Paris, for example, there are many thousands of painters continually producing paintings to please only themselves. Nobody wants most of their pictures and they cannot be exchanged for money, acceptable to the artist's grocer and landlord. The ghastly situation is most vividly presented in the annual street fair where unsalable pictures are offered at bargain prices to passers-by who will not purchase. Their pictures were not ordered by a patron to fill some definite wall space. At best they were rash speculations, that might find a place, if at all, in a museum. But the museums do not merely buy what nobody else wants, and their wall space is very restricted in any event. In America, the majority of art students later find a means of livelihood in magazine illustration, in designs for advertising and commerce, in interior decoration or fashion drawings, because here there is a continuous need for art work of a kind which can be ordered to fill rather definite requirements.

This principle also affords a means for making workable distinctions among the various arts. Painting is the art which uses paint, brushes, and canvas, with other materials. Literature is the art which uses words. Music is the art which uses various sound-producing instruments. By confining discussion to the materials and procedures characteristic of the different arts, a basis of rational and useful treatment is at once reached.

Technical Criticism

Because of his own interests, technique as the meaning of art usually appeals definitely to the artist. But the wider and more substantial public interest in art becomes, the more it also tends to be technical in its criticism. With the growth of popular journalism and the earnest desire of many people to practice the art of literature, we see that manuals of composition and rhetoric flourish, college and correspondence courses are given in great numbers. One of the few things which an American student is sure to study in college is how to write a short story. Thus the literary articles and book reviews in critical journals and newspapers are today surprisingly technical in character.

Expert criticism is nearly always technical in the main, especially when there is a public itself acquainted with the methods and materials of the craft. It is often asserted by painters that only a painter should write about art, because only one who knows how it is done can tell whether or not it is well done, and it is true that much of the best writing about art has been done by those who, if they were not conspicuously successful in its practice, had yet become familiar with its problems and the means of solving them through personal application. This charge is not so often brought against the reviewer who writes a notice of a novel, for the reason that the reviewer is using words, the same medium employed by the novelist. But on looking back at what artists have written, it is impossible to show that they have avoided the points of view, the prejudices or conventions common to artists, lay critics, and art lovers alike. Technical knowledge is not, it seems, a complete protection against error in judgment and its expression in words. Meissonier was as unfair and wrong in what he said with regard to Courbet as Cézanne was with regard to Van Gogh, from the standpoint of art history.

The value of current literary criticism is largely due to its knowledge of technique, and the same is becoming more and more a fact in art criticism, following our improved acquaintance with the technique of painting and sculpture. It is probably aided by a wider understanding of the problems and materials of architecture, awakened by such interesting innovations as have taken place in America in the last few years; aided, too, by a more intelligent appreciation of color harmony and design through popular concern with interior decoration.

An unscholarly and fundamentally uncritical, but popular, writer recently evolved a formula which has been widely adopted. When Clive Bell invented the phrase "significant form" he provided a phrase which to many solved all the theoretical difficulties of art. One who upholds the principle of technique has pointed out, that if the art objects which Bell uses as illustrations of his thesis are really significant form they are significant of human gestures in the medium concerned. Such a formula may also serve to explain the difference between the beauty of art and the beauty of nature. Natural beauty, as of the setting sun, is then that which excites aesthetic emotion by recalling human gestures, with forms of color and line in painting, or with forms of words in poetry and of tones in music.

A precise knowledge of materials and technique is, indeed, necessary for the museum curator, the art expert, the dealer, the critic and the original investigator into problems of art history. The question becomes crucial when it is a matter of forgeries and fakes. A court cannot award damages for slander of title, nor can the seller of an alleged work of ancient art be compelled to make restitution or be indicted for obtaining money under false pretenses, on the basis of aesthetic value or the lack of it. Museum curators who assume responsibility for spending large sums to acquire objects for public collections, art experts who furnish certificates of prestige to objects offered for sale at auction, dealers who invest their money and risk the confidence of their patrons as well, critics who undertake to praise, blame, explain or interpret works of art past and present, scholars in the field of fine arts who aim to establish scientifically the time, place, and personality of origin for art works, must all, for safety's sake, make sure that the objects discussed are original works of art and not forgeries. For this purpose considerations of technique, material, and purpose are essential, but the field is so vast that few experts are expected or undertake to profess an exact knowledge of more than a fraction of it. To identify the object and place it in its authentic context chronologically and geographically is impossible without an objective knowledge of external characteristics common to the work under consideration and a sufficient number of other works whose identity is already established. The public is hardly ever satisfied when it is discovered that a given object is a fraud, and museum experts claim that its aesthetic merit justified its purchase and exhibition. It is usually not long after the discovery of a fraud before even claims to genuine aesthetic value are abandoned.

By modern means, such as the fluoroscope, the violet- and the X-ray, materials can be tested to establish their age, and not only does the forger always impose the aesthetic ideals of his own day in making a copy, imitation, or forgery of the art of a period other than his own, but the tools, materials, and methods he employs are also different and produce a more or less different result. Just as superior aesthetic merit is perhaps best realized through a comparison with objects of lower rank, the stylistic integrity of major works of art is often most clearly discerned through comparison with imitations and copies, either by contemporaries of the original artist or by his successors. On the whole, however, the significance of imitations, school pieces, forgeries, and copies is not sufficiently realized by scholars and critics. When a scandal develops, there is a short period of intense excitement and then the episode is forgotten, while the offending object is concealed, destroyed, or resold.

Technique as the meaning of art is thus one which artists can and must appreciate, and it is a central part of the specialist's profession. It is important for the layman also. While fashion may change and popular preferences alter as to what is admirable among works of art, whatever happens to be of interest at any given time must fulfill the constant criteria of technique, purpose, and material, and so must any surviving objects from past periods. The totality of existing objects which have at some time or other been considered objects of fine art is never co-extensive with active appreciation of value, but their objective characteristics as technical products persist. Even when aesthetic enjoyment coincides with a technical product or class of products, those properties are present. When the skill with which the means are manipulated is more conspicuous than their contribution to an integral aesthetic experience, or when the means are inappropriate to the intent of the artist, the objective properties are even more conspicuously present. In either case, a consciousness of the harmony or discord of the means is an integral part of the individual aesthetic experience at the time and place when it does occur.

If the harmony which we feel is so complete that we do not immediately analyze the medium, isolating it as a constant source of an intermittent or episodic experience, it is not due to success or failure in imitation. An outline drawing such as we find in pencil sketches, in etchings, or in Greek vases, does not really resemble a model in nature very closely. It is an adequate convention with which we are familiar and which we accept gladly because the nature of an outline drawing is fully explained by the fact that it is made with a pointed instrument.

Technique in Sculpture, Painting, and Literature

Sculptural vision depends on habitual conception in terms of the material employed. One of the most disastrous influences, a factor that is largely responsible for the prevailing poverty of modern sculpture, is the practice of sculptors to model their works first in the round by accumulating and adding bits of clay, wax, or plastecine on a revolving stand. The model is then cast in bronze or pointed off, and copied by workmen using power-driven chisels. Such a practice has no necessary or obvious relation to the material in which their work is finally presented, and this gap between creative vision and material realization makes sculpture comparable with great epochs of the past quite impossible. What signs of improvement are to be detected in this art for the last few decades are due to a reawakened sense of the inherent quality of his materials on the part of the sculptor. Michelangelo long ago worked out what many thoughtful critics believe to be the proper method, when he distinguished between sculpture *per via di porre* and *per via di levare,* putting the material on and taking it off, and he decided that the latter is the proper way. In this he was confirmed by certain Neoplatonist analogies and illustrations. When a figure is hewn out of a solid block of marble, nothing is added but the labor and thought of the artist. The figure as it finally stands free is immanent in the material rock, every cubic inch of the finished statue was already there and in the same relative position to all the others. The vision of the sculptor, who conceives an image of what he desires to produce and sees it as already existing in the stone, waiting to have the superficial encumbrance or obstructing parts of the stone lifted away, is therefore not something unreal or fantastic. He sees something that tangibly is there already and which it is his privilege to reveal.

Similar observations are often made with regard to painting and the graphic arts. The laws of painting, it is asserted, derive from the nature of the tools or brushes, the pigments and vehicles, the panel, canvas, or wall, and the trained habits of the men using them, just as truly as the laws of football are derived from the materials, technique, and conventions of that game. The broad outlines of the history of painting can be followed through tracing the effects possible to and realized in fresco used on the wall surface, miniatures painted on vellum or ivory, tempera and eventually oil on panels, and finally oil painting on canvas. The laws governing the progressive elaboration of results in exploiting these different media can be shown as inevitable consequences of the properties of the media themselves. In the graphic arts the possibilities of wood engraving which were followed by engraving, then by etching and its allied processes, offer an even clearer and more familiar demonstration of the principle, since most histories of the graphic arts are written according to the medium and technique employed.

In literature, manuals instructing intending authors and poets obviously substantiate the claims of this principle. To test its validity there, it is necessary only to translate a sonnet of Shakespeare's from verse into prose. Care should be taken to recast the sentences into straight, logical form, using only familiar words and sentence structures, such as are employed when our aim is to convey as clearly as possible just what we mean. By definition, the prose translation should mean exactly the same as the original sonnet, its content should be precisely the same. The difference, then, is in the form of the materials. The difference between literary expression and ordinary conversation, and even between verse and prose, is not only an abstract or metaphysical one, but also a concrete objective difference in the materials used and the way in which they are used.

In controversies, too, over free as against conventional forms in verse, the legitimate ground of combat has been with regard to the materials to be employed, words and their arrangements. Llewellyn Jones defends the liberal movement on the basis of considerations of form, where Theodore Maynard attacks it in his *The Fallacy of Free Verse,* from the same fundamental principle. At any rate, when words and their arrangements are accepted as concrete objects for disagreement, the issue is clearer than when it is stated vaguely as a matter of freedom, independence, and liberty, for what purpose and from what tyranny being left rather indistinct.

In the history of thinking about art, however, one of the most important applications of the principle of technique and medium has been to the problem conspicuously stated in Lessing's *Laokoön.* It is held by many that failure to observe the limitations of the medium, or the attempt to combine several different media at the same time, is bound to produce inferior or even worthless results. The neoclassic and rather pedantic effort to apply the principle rigidly has, nevertheless, tended more often than not to restrict excessively the freedom of art even within the chosen medium. Thus Horace's famous *Art of Poetry,* or *Epistle to the Pisos,* by its emphatic advice to practice consistency in the arts, as a matter of fact tends to impose upon poetry the inflexibility of painting, and limit the freedom of verse to the static descriptions of frescoed walls. At least this was the favored interpretation of the phrase *ut pictura poesis,* although in its context the analogy, "as painting is, so is poetry," specifically applies to the requirement that a work of art should be viewed near and sharply as well as far off and broadly, and consistently satisfy the observer from both points. In that respect it is a repetition of the virtues of consistency. The subjection of poetry to painting is to be seen in the interpretation of such critics as the sixteenth-century Daniello, who said: "Painting is a tacit and dumb poetry; poetry, a speaking picture. As the imitation of the painter is done with the stylus, and the brush, and a diversity of colors, so is that of the poet, with tongue and pen, with numbers and harmonies." In this critic we have characteristically present imitation as the philosophic doctrine, determination of the several arts on the basis of the media employed, and theoretical conclusions drawn thence which restrain poetry within the limitations of paintings.

Irving Babbitt's *New Laokoön* is one of the best known modern documents in this controversy, an essay on the confusion of the *genres.* As an illustration of the persistence of Horace's formula, he refers to Spence, an eighteenth-century writer, who in his *Polymetis,* declared that: "Scarce anything can be good in a poetical description which would appear absurd if represented in a statue or picture." Examples of confusion in the arts which Babbitt cites are: Rossetti's attempts to paint his sonnets and write his pictures, and Mallarmé's effort to compose musical symphonies with words. Babbitt also points out that whereas Bernini confounded the standards of painting with those of sculpture and architecture, Lessing may justly be accused of erring in the opposite direction, of applying the standards of sculpture to painting. Confusion of the *genres* is also, according to Babbitt, at the bottom of romantic excess, and he quotes Faguet with approval: "The very essence of Diderot's criticism and of his whole understanding of art is the confusion of the *genres*. . . . If inclined to be malicious one might say he was a good dramatic critic in the Salon, and a good art critic in dealing with the drama."

There is, however, not a little of the Horatian prejudice in Babbitt's own observations with regard to suggestion in literature. He remarks: "Suggestive word-painting is, within proper bounds, an entirely legitimate art: when it oversteps these bounds, when images are offered as a substitute for ideas, when words are turned to purely voluptuary uses and divorced from rational purpose, the result is not a real advance but rather the beginning of decadence. Keats prayed in his more callous days for a 'life of sensations rather than thoughts.' Many modern romanticists have aspired to live this life, and often with considerable success. We can trace with special clearness in the romanticism of nineteenth-century France this tendency toward a hypertrophy of sensations and an atrophy of ideas, toward a constantly expanding sensorium and a diminishing intellect."

His point of view receives particular support in his discussion of programme music, when he says: "Schumann sought to give musical expression to Cologne Cathedral, Richard Strauss to Nietzsche's philosophy; Liszt to a poem of Hugo's on Schiller's; Huber set out to orchestrate one of Arnold Böcklin's pictures. . . . Many persons will sympathize with the man who waxed enthusiastic over the way Richard Strauss had reproduced in one of his tone-poems the whistling of the wind through the arms of a mill, but was told that what the master had really tried to render in this passage was the bleating of a flock of sheep."

Objections to the Principle of Technique

The objections to the principle of technique and the opposition to it are based on a number of different grounds, and as we have seen in the case of other principles examined, the various attacks are not necessarily consistent with one another. Most of the objections to technique, indeed, apply only to the extent that it alone is considered a complete and sufficient explanation of art, and the implications concealed in the term purpose or aim, which is part of its definition, are ignored. One of the most obvious tests to determine the adequacy of this principle is to carry the experiment with a sonnet, already discussed, one step further. To prove the necessity of form, the experiment was made of translating a sonnet into prose with precisely the same logical content, and the result indicated that it is the difference in the arrangement of the words, a technical manipulation of the materials of poetry, which establishes the difference between poetry and prose. The next step is to translate the sonnet so that it will, if anything, be improved in its musical quality and rhythm. This can be done by preserving all the vowel sounds as they are and substituting labial and liquid consonants for all those appearing in the several words of the sonnet. The verse has then a vaguely suggestive quality like that of a song sung in a foreign language which one does not understand. It seems as if it ought to mean something, but it no longer does. It is nonsense. It is pure pattern and possibly abstract in a high degree. But it lacks sense, and without some sense sensible people will not be satisfied for long. The conclusion therefore is that form does not suffice in itself to distinguish between aesthetic and unaesthetic forms, it leaves out of the question the formative element, and elevates a condition of art into its determinant, similar, in this respect, to the principle that morals is the judge of aesthetic value.

Speaking of the manuals of architecture and the other arts which consist of data and information on materials and processes, Croce observes: "As ought to be clear, such empirical collections cannot be reduced to knowledge. Composed of notions really pertaining to various sciences and disciplines, in them their philosophic and scientific principles are found. The proposal to elaborate a scientific theory of the several arts would be a desire to reduce to a unity and homogeneity what is, by destination, multiplex and heterogeneous: a desire to destroy as a collection what has been put together for the very purpose of obtaining a collection. The attempt to give a rigorously scientific form to manuals for the architect, or the painter, or the musician, would clearly leave in our hands nothing but the general principles of mechanics, optics, or acoustics. And if one begins to extract from them and isolate the really artistic observations scattered among them, one leaves the field of the several arts and passes on to aesthetics, which is always general aesthetics, or, more correctly, cannot be divided into general and special. This last (the proposal to provide a technique which turns out to be an aesthetics), has often happened, when, in elaborating such theories and technical manuals men have been employed with a strong scientific sense and a natural philosophic disposition."

Much of the uniformity and the consistency of tradition attributed to the Middle Ages is a genuine characteristic of the late mediaeval guilds, which were self-protective labor unions, composed of skilled artisans. Only members of the local guild could practice their art in any given city, only apprentices duly and carefully trained by a master could be admitted to membership. Thus the guilds kept the supply of skilled artisanship within the bounds of normal demand; by governing rigidly the number and training of the master craftsmen, a monopoly was preserved and a living guaranteed all the members. On the other hand, the guild guaranteed to the purchasing public both the quality of the workmanship and the standard of the materials employed. Such a system perpetuated traditions precisely those of the principle now under consideration. It retarded the development of new styles, as it has with the painters of Russian ikons. But increased ease of transportation, the enlargement of economic areas of distribution, financing of interurban and international exchange of commodities, altered conditions so that local guilds could not well survive the competition of metropolitan centers. With the industrial age and improved communication of artistic ideas and products, the guild was a mere hindrance to progress, an obsolete form.

In any event, the applicability of the principle of technique varies with the different arts. In constructing a building which will require a long time to erect, the co-operation of a large number of men, the expenditure of great sums, and the approval of the people in general for those reasons, conservatism becomes quite natural, and thus architecture has been perhaps the most continuous of the arts, the slowest to reflect changes in style which, in some cases, have already been elsewhere abandoned before being taken up by architecture. In the making of a drawing or a poem, however, the factors which affect the construction of a Gothic cathedral are of little weight. The materials are inexpensive, or free, the technique may be acquired without long commercial apprenticeship or elaborate professional training, the result hardly has value solely in proportion to the cost or nature of the materials, the difficulty of acquiring knowledge and practice in the art's technique, or the specific social and economic demands of the public. Furthermore, with the progress of time and the development of engineering in general, the material as such counts for less and less. To paint a picture in the days of the early Renaissance was a hazardous operation because the materials were not easily procured, they were expensive, and to risk experiment or place them in the hands of inexperienced amateurs was asking too much. Today the cost is far less, artists can waste cheap materials without great loss to anybody. This limitation may still apply to tailors and jewelers but not to all of the workers in the fine arts.

Furthermore, art objects are today less apt to be esteemed primarily because of the cost of the materials or the difficulty of working them. The porphyry statues of Egypt were hard to cut with the tools available. The cryselephantine statues of Greece were constructed of precious materials, so that they were early the prey of the looter. But again, these are today considerations which affect the price of jewelry and not that of objects of fine art.

The emancipation of the artist and his liberation from the status of the skilled laborer are results in modern civilization of the literary culture of the Italian Renaissance. A revival of enthusiasm for classical antiquity, an intense eagerness to repossess classical literature, were nourished and stimulated by what architecture survived, by fragments of classical architectural ornament and metal objects, and especially by Roman sculpture. The light in which Renaissance artists viewed relics of ancient Greek and Roman artistic achievement was, however, one derived from classical authors colored by their own poetic but literary imagination. The surviving art works of antiquity were held equal in dignity and importance with the literary remains. Observing the high praise of artists in classical literature, especially Pliny, artists of the Renaissance sought to distinguish themselves by their literary culture. Such education had customarily been acquired only by men of letters, courtiers, and some nobles. But artists aimed to attain the same social status as the latter, and they were aroused to emulate the art of antiquity as much by its literature as by the actual relics of antiquity. Thus it was literature, aided and justified by the antiquarianism of the Renaissance, which freed the artist from the day-laborer's yoke, under which, with few exceptions, he had suffered since the times of the Greeks themselves.

The distinction between the artist and the artisan, which cannot be maintained if technique alone is the sufficient and unique meaning of art, and no radical distinction is to be made between fine and applied art, is, however, one that has sunk deep into western civilization by this time. The same distinction was made in China where the artists were separated from the craftsmen by their relationship to literature. Chinese painters were men of letters rather than skilled workmen, and in the Orient there has usually been a close alliance between calligraphy and painting. It was an easy assimilation because both professions used the brush, but the workman who painted a lacquered chair did not attain the status accorded a scholar, gentleman, or artist, because he also used a brush.

It may also, and perhaps more reasonably, be held that art is not explained by its subjection to the medium, but consists rather in a triumph over the medium, a successful accomplishment of something which is initially superior to and infinitely more valuable than the materials through which art works. The principle of technique was in itself rarely accepted in the Renaissance. Even in his own day, because the crude materials of painting had become so cheap at the same time that they improved in quality, Leonardo da Vinci was able to say: *i colori solo fanno onore ai maestri che li fanno,* "colors give honor only to the masters that make them." With the commercial production of media today the explanation of painting can hardly consist in what colors are used and how they are employed.

With regard to Semper, it was soon found that the point of view urged by the professional architect with an exalted workman's understanding of what he did was an insufficient explanation, although it was a healthy influence against formal Hegelian abstractions. His contemporaries and successors soon found it necessary to supplement his theories with others to balance them. His view emphasized the formal aspect of art at the expense of its significance, and it had a greater interest for the typical than for the individual form.

The poverty of ideals from which some archaeologists suffer is not overcome by the objective accuracy of their methods. The presumptions involved in their goals and in their purposes are not exhausted by a statement of precise, historical criticism and the comparative method. While exact historical research, confining itself entirely to purely external and comparative considerations, which as a matter of fact it rarely does in practice, might serve to protect art-lovers from error in identification, it does not give grounds for distinguishing between the value of a Roman sewer and a Roman aqueduct. Furthermore, the archaeology of one generation is usually found to contain as many errors of fact and judgment as its theory of history or art contains logical errors. The mistakes of scholars are inevitable products, not of laxness in method or ignorance, but of the conceptions which dominate the intellectual activities of an age whether in art or in archaeology.

The versions of the theory of technique discussed above nearly all recur to the carpenter's conviction that a good chair is one that is well made. Or the real estate operator's, who feels that architecture is nothing more than an unnecessary prettiness which makes cheaply-built structures more saleable, and he hires his architects as cheaply as he buys materials. There is another aspect of the theory which is sometimes also held though today frankly voiced on rare occasions. That is the cosmetic or beauty-parlor theory of art. It was expressed in Plato's *Hippias Major,* when a speaker declared that the statue of Athena was beautiful because it was covered with gold, for everybody in Athens knew that anything covered with gold, no matter how ugly before, thereupon became beautiful. The easy refutation of this theory consists in the observable superiority, to contemplation and in action, of the beauty of a natural face and figure in competition with the cosmetician's exclusive product.

Examples Confirming Theory of Technique

The theory that the meaning of art is to be explained on the basis of material and technique is well illustrated by sculpture. A renewed appreciation of the relation of the differences in the various materials available and the corresponding differences, not only in aesthetic effect on the observer, but in the artist's creative imagination, is a conspicuous element in much modern sculpture. The work of Eric Gill, among others, displays a close adaptation of plastic form to material employed. He has produced in ivory, pinewood, Bath stone, Beer stone, Portland stone and other substances, and in each the result is appropriate to the material and it is apparent also in each case that the specific properties of the particular kind of material used provide an essential factor in producing just the effect that the given work does produce. Innumerable examples of recent sculpture illustrate the same point, and the workmanlike consciousness of what can be done and how to do it secures a greater strength in recent work than was known in the characteristic products of nineteenth-century academic sculpture. In the latter, the artist worked with a material having no necessary relation to that in which his efforts finally appeared to the observer, his personal relation to the actual processes was remote and artificial, consequently the results are thought by moderns to be anaemic or photographic.

Emphasis on medium is to be found, as one might expect, in a recent book which, under the title *Sculpture,* undertakes to provide a theoretical justification and discussion of modern sculpture and its relation to past art. Miss Rindge considers medium one of the four factors which go to make up the art of sculpture. She says:

"A sculptor is very strictly limited by his medium—stone, metal, ivory, wood or clay and within these bounds he must make his conquest. These materials instead of checking his performance must be made to serve it, to enhance it. The stone carver, then, must subscribe to these tenets: never to betray his marble by making it simulate the vapour of clouds but rather in his Aphrodite, to add to the beauty of his conception of human and divine form the beauty of a stone whose colour, grain, reflection of light all contribute to and control the value of his work. The granite gods of Egypt are thrice as godlike, as eternal, as immovable, as mute, because of their matter. This is so partly because the experience is common to most of the world of the hardness and resistance of this stone, and partly because its nature is borne out by its very appearance. . . .

"Medium, then, is held to imply, first material, second a treatment of surface commensurable with that material. So that in stone we prefer to see the grain of the stone, and although we are all familiar with polish on stone, that alteration of the surface must not proceed to a point where it tends to betray the nature of the stone, where it obliterates the texture and deceives the eye into imagining it sees some other matter. And not because this polished surface might not be beautiful in itself, but because the stone carver has taken up his chisel and obliged himself to make something beautifully stone. If he wants only to reproduce the glowing, light-encapturing qualities of flesh, let him betake himself to the waxworks where he can approximate it most closely, unless perhaps he meant to be a painter."

Miss Rindge continues the discussion by describing the characteristic effects obtainable in clay and other materials. But in her discussion she fails to overcome the antinomy of history and actuality, internal freedom and external necessity, the great problems which so vividly confront us in sculpture. A historical survey of sculpture shows that it is physically possible to obtain pictorial effects in bronze and other materials, to handle marble in such a way that it not only glows like living flesh but it almost if not quite affords us an illusion of movement. Ghiberti's bronze doors, Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne,* and Rodin's works, to mention only a few examples, establish this point. A great part of ancient and mediaeval sculpture cared so little for the surface that it was carefully concealed by coatings of various substances and colored. The patina of surviving ancient bronzes is largely an accident, not intended or admired by the artists and art-lovers of antiquity. It is not so much the intrinsic nature of the material that affects the aesthetic impression as the effect it makes on the eye. A marble statue actually looks lighter, because of its white color and translucency, than a bronze one. Few people realize, in gazing at an opaque bronze work, that it is actually but a rather thin hollow shell.

Historical study of sculpture shows, therefore, that it is extremely dangerous to insist on aesthetic determinations or limitations on the basis of material employed. Each of the materials can be or has been used to gain effects which we may dislike as inappropriate to it, but which were approved by the creative artist and his contemporaries. There is no intrinsic appropriateness in any plastic material for the purposes of art, but it is a question of common preference, preferences which prevail at some particular time, so that today we tend to approve a certain set of correspondences between material and art product, but these correspondences have been different at other historical periods, and they are bound to alter in the course of time. Thus, the particular correspondences between materials and the effects of bulk or volume and surface which we admire today we also admire in works of the past. The effects which were admired in the latter stages of the impressionist movement were admired also where present in ancient art. The effects beloved by baroque art of the seventeenth century were approved where found in art products of preceding ages. The creative artistic spirit thus escapes any precise dogmatism, the very fact of different historic styles, as something different in essence from mere systems of ornament, requires the condition that there be no necessary correspondence between aesthetic effects as a class and the nature of any particular physical material employed. But historic styles also require that each period or style possess a set of preferred correspondences which at the time seem so mutually related that they are convincingly necessary to that style.

Within the boundaries of a style and even within the production of one artist, a good deal can be explained by differences in the material manipulated by the artist. Thus the differences in effect between an engraved series of episodes from the Passion of Christ is strikingly different from a woodcut series by the same artist, Albrecht Dürer. The ease of working the materials, the tools used, the established traditions and technical processes arrived at in the course of development are all considerations which can be taken into account to explain why the effect is not identical in both cases. The contrast is, of course, even greater when we compare Dürer's painting with either his woodcuts or his engravings. But it still remains a fact that as art objects and not products of handicraft in the same class with embroidered garments and plumbing, the difference is even greater between Dürer's own *Apocalypse* series of woodcuts and some of his *Great Passion* woodcuts. The conception of pattern and design, of the treatment and function of lines and areas, of description as against construction, of depth in space against a two-dimensional surface, of accumulated interesting details compared with a closely-knit unity of the whole, are elements which change not only within the medium of the woodcut, but in Dürer's basic conceptions whether produced in wood or copper.

Similar differentiations, apart from the material employed, are to be found in the development of significant artists such as Donatello and Michelangelo. Surely the difference between the late Gothic German woodcuts and Dürer's, whether late or early, is on the other hand, more important than their similarity as both productions in the same medium. Thus medium is immediately relevant in any particular period or style, but historically it is subordinate to the basic intellectual and emotional patterns which determine historic styles. The materials actually used are those that are preferred, not those which are intrinsically required by art as such. The mind which forms and which perceives form is of vastly greater significance than the medium in which it is objectified for the artist and the art-lover.

The principle that certain materials are intrinsically suited to the art of sculpture and only by their use and submitting to their properties can beauty be attained, is similar in its exclusiveness to the naïve test of accurate imitation. A work of sculpture can just as logically be judged good when it accurately imitates the accidents of surface and volume of the model, as it can be on the basis that it is restrained within the characteristic effects due to the properties of the particular material employed. The natural desire for an objective and easily applied external test may be satisfied with either criterion. When, however, the conception of a creative will, a contemplative or analytic intelligence is admitted, for human beings who consider art a human product, material is a contributory factor; no particular material is intrinsically and exclusively related to art, provided there be some material, and material or medium is a necessary factor in general but not in particular; it conditions to a greater or less degree but it does not determine.

An emphasis on material is a necessary antidote to excessive emotionalism in the appreciation of art, an aid to impressing on the observer that art is experienced in particular objects which are human products, to offset merely literary associations and to guard against the identification of words, the material of literature, exclusively with thought and feeling. Sculpture's materials are different from those of literature and unfortunately many people suppose that the material of all art is somehow words also. But the materials of literature and sculpture, while different, are both forms of thought and emotion, and the same general patterns will be found in the great episodes of culture regardless of the material used, whether it be words or stone. Because we all use words with greater or less success, mere familiarity inclines us falsely to identify language with thought, and so few of us are familiar with the materials and processes of sculpture that we tend to exaggerate in one direction or the other, to view sculpture as a groping substitute for words or as chiefly an appropriate treatment of a given material.

A journey through any art collection or museum, a glance through any art history, will demonstrate the insufficiency of medium, technique, and utilitarian purpose as a principle to explain the meaning of art. If the basis of classification in the collection is that of medium, it is impossible to explain the differences between ancient marble sculpture and impressionist French sculpture of the nineteenth-century on the grounds of material and technique alone. If the basis is historical, it is impossible to explain the general similarities in the products of the same century or country which exist regardless of the medium employed. If the issue is confused by a compromise, some galleries being arranged by a combination of period and medium, as for example in a hall devoted to classical marble sculpture, the conclusion to be drawn is merely misinformed, for in such a gallery not only is architecture absent because of its dimensions, but so is painting of the same period because of its excessive fragility. Even a collection of the works of one artist, all in the same medium, is certain to reflect changes in the mind of the artist, changes due to his own spiritual activity and to his response to the minds of others.

The random test, the examination of a principle in the light of objects accidentally secured for comparison, is so generally applicable in refuting the sufficiency of medium as an explanation of the meaning of art, that any illustrated book about art or any collection of art will serve the purpose. Medium is a condition of art but it does not determine what is beautiful. The mind of the artist and the art-lover is more important in the creation of art and the realization of beauty than the material with which the artist works. Within these limits, therefore, what do technique and medium signify for the meaning of art? Do they, perhaps, indicate that beauty is objective?

CHAPTER VIII

DOES ART MEAN THAT BEAUTY IS OBJECTIVE?

The problem whether art means that beauty is purely subjective and irrelevant to existence, or is, on the contrary, a real element in a situation created by observing mind and something observed, is one that has already been touched upon in answering the possible objections to criticism. If the latter is the case, do objects possess beauty as a property, so that things are beautiful in the same way that they are heavy or light, cold or hot, red or blue? If beauty is real, but is not a constant property of the object, is it dependent on certain objective, almost mathematical, relations of the parts of the object to one another?

The current conviction regarding the nature of beauty and an experience of it as being purely subjective and exclusively a matter of individual experience irrelevant to substantial existence, is the greatest impediment to criticism of the fine arts; it negates in advance any value that thought about art might possess. The situation is not radically different from that in the field of ethics. But our peace and faith need not be troubled by the easy observation that matters aesthetic and ethical are different in China and France. Nor should all confidence in our own minds be destroyed by the equally easy observation that these things differ in ancient and in modern Greece. Despair is not, after all, the only alternative to a rigid and absolute dogmatism.

Wisdom is not to be attained rapidly, although we sometimes perceive beauty so suddenly and so keenly that, in comparison, our apprehension of the truth about beauty may be annoyingly slow and incomplete. Experiment, trial and error, the test of theories by objects and of objects by theories, is a procedure which requires patience, although the suddenness and persuasiveness of the aesthetic experience may sometimes incline us to hasty and arrogant judgments in our theories. But our ignorance does not mean that knowledge is impossible; though we deal with great and high matters, we do not deal with things that are completely and wholly beyond our grasp; lack of experience can be alleviated by willingness and an effort to gain it. The variety and richness of the actual world includes the world of thought also, but we neglect to profit by it if we reject ideas and explanations without understanding what they mean. Thus the rather unpopular idea that beauty is a quality or even a property of objects deserves careful consideration before it is thrust aside.

Beauty as Objective

The great benefit gained from accepting the idea that beauty is a quality of the object is that it places the grounds of relative certainty or security outside the immediate limitations of the individual. Some writers, such as Price, have even held that natural beauty is a quality absolutely inherent in objects, existing in them whether any mind perceives them or not. Day holds that there are four proofs of the objective reality of beauty. First, he appeals to common-sense; we do not question, when we perceive beauty, that the thing perceived is beautiful. Second, there is the testimony of language to beauty; even in explaining beauty by the psychological theory of association, one must use language which denies the theory of association. Third, the ordinary proofs and tests of reality apply to the beauty of an object as well as that object's reality. Fourth, there is a universal consciousness of an immediate effect produced by an object; since the object is real the property which enables it to so affect us must also be real.

To ascribe complete objectivity to the aspects of an object of thought is a natural tendency of our minds. Such a view is to be found in some passages of Plato, where it is often closely allied to his theory of ideas, and exhibits his aesthetic valuation of clear mathematical relations. The supernaturalism popularly and to some extent justly associated with Plato's views is illustrated by the attributes of "eternal and absolute" given to the beauty of mathematical figures and concepts. In Aristotle, too, we find a close relation is thought to exist between beauty, a quality of the object, and the measurable or comparable dimensions and proportions of the beautiful thing. In the *Poetics,* for example, it is declared that beauty consists in a certain size and arrangement of parts. The scholastic philosophy, with its scaffolding built upon Aristotle, accepts this same general position, but introduces a Neoplatonic element which eventually opens the door to the whole romantic interpretation, in its explanation of why the soul delights in harmony. *Pulchrum in debita proportione consistit,* says St. Thomas Aquinas, *quia sensus delectatur in rebus debite proportionatis sicut in sibi similibus.* "The beautiful consists in proper proportion, because sense delights in properly proportioned things as in things like itself."

Is Beauty a Property of the Object?

There is here the danger, and it is one that has often been incurred, that beauty may be considered a measurable property of the material objects of sensation, just as their weight or temperature may be measured in terms of a common unit. The lack of such a unit in our experiences of beauty would indicate that beauty is not so measurable. But to be incommensurable and to be completely subjective and irrelevant to the rest of experience is obviously not the same thing, so that it is possible logically to insist on the objectivity of beauty in several ways. Laird, for example, compares beauty, not with weight or temperature, but with color which is of a somewhat different nature, and with shape, which is even further from the class of perceptions into which weight and temperature fall. He declares:

"It is commonly argued that beauty is plainly a thing of the mind and therefore subjective. The reply to this argument is that the fact is doubtful and the inference false. . . . The printed page is a turnstile which clicks us into things. We are confronted with fact when we read and this fact is not our thoughts about it. . . . It is difficult to see, therefore, why so many philosophers and critics hesitate to ascribe beauty to things in the same sense as they ascribe colour or shape." To the man who objects that beauty is an emotion, he replies that feeling is always blended with thinking, even thinking about the multiplication table. There is no proof that the beauty of poetry and a delight in it are identical. As for beauty being an acquired or associated meaning of things, all our meanings are acquired. It is consequently unsound to argue that only primitive and innate meanings are objective, spontaneously yielded by their objects, or to say that because a meaning is acquired it is therefore subjective.

As Laird points out, if ranks or differences in degree of beauty are admitted, then the objectivity of beauty is admitted. To avoid this logical implication, pantheists and dilettantes customarily identify beauty immediately with being, although such a procedure abolishes not only differences in value but value itself, for where all things are beautiful equally, all things are equally ugly. We cannot, however, distinguish degrees and ranks of beauty or its opposite, without implying the objectivity of the quality itself; there must be a positive for comparatives to be possible.

The postulated continuity of existence, our assumption that there are beautiful things that have never been seen and that they are still beautiful in spite of that, is another powerful argument on behalf of the claim that beauty is a quality of the object. We must confess that the crystals in the snow storm are beautiful, yet we can see few of them clearly enough to observe that beauty, and those whose beauty is perceived can be but a minute fraction of those that are beautiful. The beauty of bold tropical blossoms in the jungle is not the less vigorously beautiful, for though they do not blush they are still unseen. To judge by the small part of the earth's volume that we can observe on or near its surface, there must be innumerable crystals buried deep in the earth where they never have been and never can be seen by any human eye, yet that does not rob them of their beauty. Laird even goes so far as to say that the Ninth Symphony would still be beautiful if no one had ever heard it. These things are in themselves beautiful, we have a capacity to perceive their beauty, and such perception is contingent on our activities, not on their existence. The suggestion that beauty consists in our feeling for it, Laird rejects energetically. He says: "If our minds are charged with feeling whenever we appreciate beautiful things, our feelings are also enlightened by our knowledge of the significance of these things. Beautiful things, therefore, are much more than occasions of beautiful feelings, and if beauty is not a predicate of non-mental things *simpliciter,* it cannot hold of anything less than the whole complex (thing-that-is-felt-with-delight). A perceiving and comprehending delight is no mere feeling."

Abstractly considered, the final conclusion of a thoroughly naturalistic aesthetics or ethics is an unquestioning submission to brutal convention as such, a philosophical agreement with mob rule or the will of the most powerful. A thoroughly subjective conclusion as to beauty or morals is even more melancholy, for slaves have at least the company of one another, but such a view leads to unqualified solitude, impotence of judgment, paralysis in action, and a negation of values in general. It is difficult to say which position is the easier to assume or the most commonly approved. In practice both are, indeed, often combined. The theory held is a solipsistic subjectivity and the moral code one of cynical naturalism, a timid or querulous adherence to conventional ethics, but a readiness to seek exclusively selfish advantage wherever detection and reprisal can be avoided.

As already noted, the contrasts offered by differences in taste are more striking than important. That there is such a thing as beauty is much more significant than that people differ in their capacity to perceive it, and to formulate their vision in beautiful things. But our separate individualities, our personal identity, could not be determined unless our capacities, responses, and experiences of such responses in the past, did differ. It seems clear to human beings that it is better to be our human selves and to differ in our failures and successes than to be indistinguishable from one another and from the environment. That we are not, however, isolated in our preferences and in our experiences of beauty is shown on various levels, by the phenomena of fashion and modes in dress, on the one hand, and by the existence of historic styles in the fine arts, on the other. In fact, without orderly and coherent changes, such things as histories of art or literature would be contradictions in terms; but without individuals within each historical movement differing in their capacities and achievements there could be no movement either. Thus the claim that beauty is, that it is found in things, particularly in objects of art, does not conflict with the belief that time, too, is real and that the objects to which we attribute beauty may change in the course of that time. That beauty is found at different levels by different coherent groups of minds shows that it is not a subjective, irrelevant eccentricity. Though our optical organs may be practically the same throughout historic time, what those eyes have seen and have desired to see has not continued unchanged. Through it all, beauty has always been possible, has been actual to some men.

Plotinus Interprets Plato

It was not such hints as Plato had given out regarding the nature of beauty which have permeated European thought directly, but his suggestions passed through the mind of Plotinus, who in his turn fancied he was merely a faithful interpreter of the master. According to Plotinus, beauty does not consist in the properties of physical substance, but in the eternal idea which material forms reflect. Material forms perceived by the physical eye are, however, so many partial and defective mirrors in which beauty may be seen with another sort of vision, distinct from the physical eye. The permanent element of beauty in beautiful things which are themselves phenomenal and transient is an underlying immanent essence. But the idea mirrored in such things can be reflected into the human mind. The characteristic passage in which this view is expressed in the *Enneades* is: "That which sees must be kindred and similar to its object, before it can see it. The eye could never have beheld the sun, had it not become sunlike. The mind could never have perceived the beautiful, had it not first become beautiful itself. Every thing must partake of the divine nature, before it can discern the divinely beautiful."

With a characteristic Greek emphasis on the definiteness of formed and intelligible perceptions, involved in the use of the term Logos, or Word, for reason itself, Plotinus took the final step in the interpretation of Plato which has been decisive for Plato's effect on subsequent generations and for Plato's profound influence on the modern world. As in the Gospel, the term Logos was a means of reconciling Messianic hopes and Hellenic philosophy, so Plotinus harmonized an inherent respect for the rational and an extended appreciation of the beautiful by identifying beauty with the Logos. Thus in a broad way material things are beautiful insofar as they vaguely suggest the rational structure that underlies them all. But to the degree that they fail to do so, they are ugly. Things are frankly beautiful when they are filled with the Logos, and the artist through his susceptibility to beauty thus absorbs into himself the rational apprehension with the aesthetic appreciation. This thought was extraordinarily convincing to the romanticists, for they found it comparatively easy to go a little further, identifying the rational reality also with the ethically good, and substitute the beautiful for the virtuous.

However, Plotinus was still too much of a Greek and too logical to admit any such confusion. He insisted that the artist should produce things that are aesthetically superior to the rough products of nature, because the artist has the mind and the capacity to penetrate to the beauty imperfectly suggested in nature and to present it more clearly and convincingly than nature ever does. Whether or not we are artists, we daily experience the fact that the ideal and the actual do not overlap or coincide. It is the longing to attain the idea, distantly seen and only in flashes, which keeps artists pressing on, never satisfied with their own or one another's achievements. Any specific and beautiful object created is not a final end in itself, nor is it a means to an end, but it is accepted as a temporary conquest, a stage approaching a little nearer to something unattainable but nevertheless real, since it is identified with the Logos itself, that which is most real of all.

Plotinus differs from Aristotle and the implications of Plato that the beauty of beautiful things consists in their symmetry, harmony or other relations of the parts to the whole. In a manner that has proved so congenial to modern thought that it is being revived in a basic principle of the *Gestalt* psychology, he shows that the things which individually are beautiful are not all composed of parts which are symmetrically balanced, but that they are primarily wholes in which the parts are absorbed and lost to view. The parts are revealed only by the artificial and sometimes destructive processess of analytical separation. Furthermore, we see that the separate parts of beautiful things which are composed of parts are often in themselves beautiful so that beauty cannot be a result of composed parts, when the parts have this quality to begin with. Thus, Plotinus concludes it is only when the external reflects the internal, when unintelligent matter is transfused with intelligible meaning, that individual things become beautiful. Nature affords a continuous series of things that transcend themselves in the sense that they communicate to the perceiving mind a quality which things do not have for one another or probably even for animals, but which is necessary to their existence and makes them what they are, an intellectual principle perceptible to sensitive and eager minds. A negative statement of the same matter might be put in this fashion: we differ in our perceptions of beauty because we are not uniformly unsuccessful in obtaining an insight into beauty.

Romantic Philosophers Depend on Plotinus

The aesthetic approach to philosophical problems, derived from Plotinus, is fundamental in the romantic movement. Schiller declared that: "Reason demands unity, nature variety, and both systems of legislation lay their claims on man." Things which are found as separate parts or are seen by analysis to be separate parts of a whole must in order to be parts imply the wholes in which they have been or can be combined. Many writers have discovered the basic principle of idealism in the belief that nothing can be made into what it is unless the capacity to become so was immanent and objective. Thus for Schiller and others, Bosanquet puts it: "Beauty is therefore an object for us, because reflection is the condition under which we have a feeling of it; but at the same time it is a state of our subject, because feeling is the condition under which we have a perception of it. It is therefore a form, because we contemplate it; it is life because we feel it. In one word it is at once our state and our act. Objectivity is the root of the whole import thus ascribed to beauty; but further it must be such an objectivity as is compatible with existence in mind, in perception, in feeling, and in utterance."

The influence of the interpretation of Plato's doctrine by Plotinus is clearly seen in the conclusions drawn by the leading romantic philosophers with regard to the objectivity of beauty as the great incidental conclusion yielded by the phenomena of art. Schelling in his *System of Transcendental Idealism,* declared, in 1800: "The one thing to which absolute objectivity is given is art. Take away, it may be said, the objectivity of art, and it ceases to be what it is and becomes philosophy; give philosophy objectivity and it ceases to be philosophy and becomes art. Philosophy attains the highest but it brings to that point, so to speak, only a fraction of the man. Art brings the whole man as he is to the cognition of the highest and this is the eternal distinction and marvel of art." Schelling and the rest, to be sure, went on to introduce discussions of the conscious and the unconscious, the activity of the ego, and other topics. The significance of those aspects of their views is, however, not here in question, for it was covered sufficiently in the discussion of art as illusion. The point here is that in the objectivity of beauty as established by art the romantic and transcendental philosophers found a basis on which their various systems could be developed, so that for them the objectivity of beauty in art is indeed the fundamental doctrine.

It was not this conception of objectivity, however, which ruled in neoclassic criticism, but the formal beauty of Greek sculpture, understood mainly on the basis of Roman copies. In recent times, it is commonly urged by the inheritors of the neoclassic theory who are entrusted with the teaching of classic literature, that Greek sculpture is supreme because it is formally most beautiful. Even Ogden, Richards, and Wood in some passages seem to identify beauty in general with formal beauty, otherwise they could not speak of beauty, loveliness, grandeur, and prettiness, as aesthetic categories of the same rank.

Beauty a Quality of the Object

A view, consistently held from the beginning of discussion about art down to the present times, declares that beauty is objective in the sense that it is something relevant to existence, rather than a mere aberration of emotional stress or fantastic mental activity, and it consists in qualities of the object like harmony, proportion, and other measureable qualities. One of the earliest writers on art, a painter the title of whose book alone is preserved, was Euphranor, who died in the fourth century B. C., the author of *De Symmetria et Coloribus,* according to Pliny. He was a sculptor as well as a painter, but when symmetry is the guiding principle of his theory, as according to ancient critics it was also of his art products, the importance of such an understanding of beauty in a narrower sense becomes obvious.

This interpretation has been a favorite one with architects and is easily explained by the nature of their profession and its close relation to ancient art ever since the Renaissance. The book of the Roman Vitruvius on architecture is very important since it is the chief example of Greek architectural theory now surviving, although it was the production of a man who was not himself a remarkable architect, and his compilation of ideas and data from theorists that preceded him is far from clear or conclusive. Still, it is all we have, and in the Renaissance and afterwards it was particularly influential. Vitruvius seems to have possessed six aesthetic categories, which were not free from overlapping, and the ordinary translation of his terms does not indicate what the context and parallel passages imply. But similar principles were commonplaces among ancient artists, who considered that the most beautiful proportions were those embodied in the human figure. Having determined that the foot of a beautiful man is one-sixth the length of his height, the same relation was found to hold true of the Doric column, whose height is also six times the width of its base. Thus the Doric column represented masculine power. The Ionic column, however, is eight times as high as it is broad at its base, and a well-proportioned woman is also eight times as high as her foot is long, so that the Ionic column represents feminine grace.

Carrying on the subordinate element of Neoplatonism to be found in scholastic philosophy, such ecclesiastical writers as the Abbé Vallet and others have attempted to produce a Neo-Thomist principle of art which, however, relies mainly upon this same classical and neoclassical view. The Abbé declares that beauty exists independently of us and of every subject, and that it consists of five elements which are: variety, integrity, proportion, unity, and splendor of form. It is in the last mentioned quality that a saving remnant of Neoplatonic theory appears, but its basic inconsistency with the formal criteria which precede it is not perceived. Such tests are easily taught and easily applied, although it is impossible to explain how they can guarantee a beautiful result even when conscientiously followed, as thousands of docile students have discovered. Brown, for example, asserts that the conditions of formal beauty are these: clearness of arrangement, repetition or regularity, and contrast or variety.

The neoclassic theory persists almost unimpaired in a text-book, written by an architect, which enjoys great popularity. This volume, by H. Van Buren Magonigle, is entitled, *The Nature, Practice and History of Art,* and the second chapter dogmatizes confidently as follows: "All works of art, whether poems, musical compositions, works of architecture, sculpture, or painting, will be found upon analysis to have fundamental traits, qualities, principles, in common, such as: Design, Proportion, Balance, Symmetry, Rhythm, Pattern, Harmony, Contrast, Style, Beauty. Some of these are more evident in some forms of artistic expression than in others—as for example, Pattern, which is more evident in the art of textile weaving than in Music, although in the larger sense Pattern is to be found in Music as well. Style and Beauty are the products of Design, Proportion, Balance, Symmetry, Rhythm, Pattern, Harmony, Contrast, and Taste is the selective quality which combines these elements in such a manner as to produce Style and Beauty." This writer goes on to clarify each class of attributes, but when it comes to beauty, he simply refuses to speak, other than to place it on a plane so high and so remote that it may mean anything and nothing. He says: "And, after all, after the most searching analysis and the most acute definition of the elements of a work of art, the all-essential spirit of Beauty in it eludes all analysis, all definition. Of Beauty, I decline to attempt any definition."

The principle of unity is on a somewhat different level from that on which the qualities discussed by Magonigle are to be found. It is at any rate the chief condition of formal beauty, and the principal point of critical analysis on which theorists of many schools can agree, although the source of this unity is another matter. Development of the principle usually involves the further thought of unity in variety.

Parker urges that the artist reveals hidden unities which the mind delights to discover. He also states that unity is not purely intellectual or perceptual, but it is also motor and organic, as well as emotional, using symmetry as an instance of this claim. He then analyzes in some detail the various modes in which unity in variety may exist, distinguishing three principal kinds: the harmony or union of co-operating elements; the balance of contrasting or conflicting elements; and the development or evolution of a process towards an end or climax.

It is not necessary, however, to rely exclusively on formal criteria to determine the nature of beauty, to accept either Croce or the principle of empathy, in order to see that the principle of objectivity is itself one that is continually assumed in the discussion of art history or art objects. Literary study, for example, because it is usually a study of the forms or types of literary excellence, necessarily implies the principle of objectivity. Practically all ancient and modern study of rhetoric and a good deal of poetics is concerned chiefly with objective, if not formal, qualities and the methods of observing or securing them. Most handbooks and manuals for the study of poetry deal almost exclusively with the formal and external aspects of the subject, enumerating and analyzing the established patterns and citing accepted examples of excellence in those patterns. Proceeding on this basis, we can see how easy it is to go just a little further and assert that poetry or art in general is the successful exploitation of the medium employed, since critical study as well as creative activity is so largely concerned with the materials and the formal arrangements into which they are cast.

When Beauty is Measured

But, taking the extreme objective position, beauty may be held to consist in measurable relations and proportions, and then, it is often assumed, it ought to be possible to find answers to these questions: What proportions are most beautiful? What mathematical formulas may be used not only to test the beauty of beautiful things but to create and guide beauty in the process of becoming actual?

The beauty of simple geometrical figures has often been remarked, and the aesthetic value attached to geometry is clear in Plato and other Greeks. The basic principles of Pythagoreanism, which reappear in the latter stages of Plato's thought, rest on the belief that reality is measurable and there are inner correspondences between the measurements of things and their values or functions. Although it is not found in their philosophy, we wonder why the obviously Greek answer was not given to the problem raised by the dogma of Protagoras. If man is the measure of all things, it may be asked, with what does he measure? The Greeks were in the main convinced that he measured by geometry, not by his immediate and individual judgments of personal value, and the proof of objective and intrinsic reality, perceptible to the mind, exemplified by geometry, was a favorite one in antiquity.

Significantly enough, ancient theory was confined in large part to the objective relations of lines, masses, and volumes, but in more modern days equally external and semi-scientific theories have been worked out to control colour relations.

The epoch-making treatise of Chevreul lies behind the impressionistic formula in painting, and Hogarth's theory of the serpentine line is an attempt to combine formalism and baroque aims in an objective criterion of beauty. In still more recent times, cubism and other radical movements have stressed objective and almost geometrical abstract relations in a way which has not yet produced a really comprehensive and dogmatic treatise. The reason why it has not may be that the movement itself was of such brief duration that it had collapsed before the books could be written.

The incurable human yearning for magic formulas and nostrums that will make art, genius, and success really democratic because anybody who knows the formula can at will gain those happy ends, usually depends on some such an assumption as the one that beauty is a matter of definite proportions and measurements which can be expressed, communicated and applied in the same manner as mathematical formulas. The most familiar recent invention of this type was that of Jay Hambidge, who prefaced his discussion of *Dynamic Symmetry,* with reference to the Greek vase, by remarking that:

"Some twenty years ago, the writer, being impressed by the incoherence of modern design and convinced that there must exist in nature some correlating principle which would give artists control of areas, undertook a comparative study of the basis of all design, both in nature and in art. This labor resulted in the determination of two types of symmetry or proportion, one which possessed qualities of activity, the other of passivity. For convenience, the active type was termed dynamic symmetry, the other static symmetry. . . .

"The Principle of dynamic symmetry is manifest in shell growth and in leaf distribution in plants. A study of the basis of design in art shows that this active symmetry was known to but two peoples, the Egyptians and the Greeks; the latter only having developed its full possibilities for purposes of art. The writer believes that he has now recovered, through study of natural forms and shapes in Greek and Egyptian art, this principle for the proportioning of areas." This philosopher's stone of criticism is one that never fails to tempt some thinkers who are keenly impressed by the apparent futility and inconclusiveness of a subjective aesthetics. Their dogmatism is often in inverse proportion to their knowledge of art history and the history of ideas.

More significant, in the long run, is the recurrent interest in the canon of proportions of the human figure. Although only one definite system remains from the Middle Ages, a study of Romanesque sculpture hints that some arbitrary and accepted systems of proportions for the human figure must have been accepted and communicated in formulas. The work in this field which remains to us from the hand of Villard de Honnecourt is a significant vestige of what was probably at one time a considerable body of dogmatic rules. But the same basic interest absorbed some of the greatest artists of the Renaissance. The researches and conclusions of eminent masters like Alberti, Dürer, and Leonardo da Vinci do not stand alone; they are simply the most conspicuous examples of an interest prevalent at that time. Even though, as some sceptics claim, the human body seems beautiful to us merely because we are human beings, still if that body at any rate is beautiful for us, it should, one may suppose, be possible to establish systems of proportion in terms of some unit of measurement presented by the body itself, analyzing bodies which are thought beautiful, averaging accumulated measurements, and summarizing them in formulas so that they can be used as tests and guides. That view is suggested in manuals of composition and textbooks on figure drawing. Most books on composition, for example, the popular manual of H. R. Poore, discuss formal composition, but even books on life sketching, like one by Richard G. Hatton, have something to say on the proportions of the figure.

Is Beauty Real?

The objections to the position that beauty is objective in the sense that it is not solely relevant to a possibly mistaken and illusioned solitary mind, are the usual attacks on the objective position from the subjective point of view. It is interesting to see how often subjectivist theories are based on phenomena of vision, in earlier times on perceptions of shape, in more recent times on those of color, to prove that sensation and abstraction are purely internal and cerebral. This emphasis is often marked in contrast with the tangible extension and texture, weight and bulk of sculpture which is taken as the type of objective reality. In general, the use of illustrations and examples drawn from the field of fine arts by philosophers, is a matter that deserves more attention than it is accustomed to receive, and it would account for many of the limitations of the great, historic systems.

More especially, the lack of agreement in specific judgments and the lack of conclusive laws in the criticism of art are considered to demonstrate that it is purely a matter of individual taste and whim, deserving no genuine respect and no serious consideration. For the general realist position, Santayana offers three sorts of proof. The first is the biological proof:

"It is evident that all animals have relevant and transitive knowledge of their environment; so that realistic knowledge is but another name for vital sensibility and intelligence." We are aware of the beauty of things, particularly of the beauty in art, in which and through which we perceive beauty in nature.

The next sort of proof is the psychological: "A living being, enduring the flux of events and living in constantly varying retrospect and expectation, especially a breathless, busy, hopeful, experimenting modern, can hardly bring himself to doubt that the very future he expects and works for may become present in due time; but this belief is the purest and most radical instance of realism. . . . Belief in time is, I think, the deepest belief we have: it is requisite for the acceptance of the witness of memory, and for rational action and hope. It is the soul of introspective psychology. Yet there is another belief which critics of knowledge have been even more loath to question, indefensible though it be on their principles: the belief in other men's minds. While their method ought evidently to establish not so much solipsism as a solipsism of the present datum, yet it never consents to doubt the whole comedy of human intercourse, just as the most uncritical instinct and the most fanciful history represent it to be. How can such a mass of ill-attested and boldly realistic knowledge fail to make the critics of realism uncomfortable in their own houses?"

The most complete subjectivist or the most cynical relativist will not hesitate, although he acknowledges no other minds than his own and professes to have little enough confidence in that, to attend a symphony concert. There he will have bought a ticket or buy one at the door, confident that if he arrives before the appointed hour, he will hear music and have communicated to him a genuine object of beauty in which he can share by intuition because the beauty of the music is real although evanescent. He will not sit alone listening to imaginary music, but he will sit in a hall surrounded by others who share his intuitions at the same time for they too have minds. Above all, he will not expect or find the musicians casually striking the same note or even doing so all together as impulse may suggest, and then retiring. The concert will consist of music played on different instruments, keeping the same time and developing patterns and sequences of notes agreed upon in advance. Thus music is in itself as realized, a proof of the realistic position with regard to time, for the reality of time alone makes music possible. But the beauty of the music, distinct from meaningless or accidental sounds, indicates that the reality of beauty is not merely something heard, but is the permanent element in music.

Santayana's third kind of proof is the logical one: "If we once see clearly that the datum is not an existing thing, nor a state of mind, but an ideal essence, a very interesting corollary comes into view. The sort of being that essences have is indefeasible, they cannot lose it or change it, as things do and must if their being is existence. Therefore intuition, or pure acquaintance with data, has an object whose reality is independent of such a perusal of it. This independence is not physical, because the object here is ideal, and never exists at all. But its logical or aesthetic character, which is all the reality it has, is inalienable: for that reason, perhaps, it was called by Plato τὸ ὄντως ὄν; being which is instrinsic, essential, and contingent on nothing else, least of all, of course on knowledge."

Santayana has some further remarks which are significant in this context. He says: "Transitiveness in knowledge has two stages or leaps; the leap of intuition, from the state of the living organism to the consciousness of some essence; and the leap of faith and of action, from the symbol actually given in sense or in thought to some ulterior existing object. The first leap, which is primary and fundamental to knowledge, alone concerns us here. It reveals some universal term, which borrows nothing whatever from the observer except its presence to him, which is perfectly adventitious to its nature, and not indicated there. Essences, like things, become objects by accident. Consequently knowledge of essence too is transitive, terminating in an object which is self-determined in its logical sphere and essential relations, and may be revealed to many minds at different times, in various contexts, and with more or less completeness."

Art Objects Illustrating Objectivity

The example of music, illustrating an extreme case of the objectivity of beauty, has just been cited. Poetry, an art existing in time, whether read silently or aloud, or listened to, is another species which serves to make the point. To those who feel that the beauty of architecture, or at least of sculpture, can be explained by measurable proportions and ratios, the claim seems obvious, that beauty is objective. By those who go so far as to assert that the beauty of such tangible objects consists in certain definable relations of that kind, the position is considered an essential corollary. For painting, too, there is the fact that the canvas persists in the physical continuum, unless destroyed by some event clearly consistent with that context. For the artist and a number of contemporaries sufficient to admit the creation, approval, and preservation of the work in the first place, with revivals of similar states of mind at later periods, it functions as an embodiment of beauty. It seems to point to the objectivity of the beautiful object's beauty, in the sense that it is relevant to the human spirit under human conditions.

Hostility to this position is based ultimately on two points; first that the arts of time and the arts which appeal primarily to vision do not possess beauty in the same way that tangible things like sculpture and architecture possess their so-called primary properties, such as temperature, weight, volume and so forth. Thus if beauty is a physical property implied in extension in space, either music and painting are not really beautiful or else beauty is not such a physical property.

The other ground of objection is that permanence or a certain kind of continuity, such as the specific gravity of material substances, is the sort of quality that beauty should be if it exists independently of an individual perceiving mind, if it is a genuinely objective quality not dependent on the whim or fancy of an evanescent individual. Since errors and hallucinations, dreams, and other sorts of individual experiences are considered unreal for the reason that they have no necessary context in the physical sequence or in the experience of other persons, so an experience of beauty, because it is held essentially similar, is not objective. It is relevant, if at all, only to the mind that individually perceives or experiences it; it is, therefore, entirely subjective and unreal.

To illustrate these points, various art objects may be cited, beginning with those most apt to be discussed by the subjectivist. Any piece of approved sculpture, such as the *Hermes* will do. It extends in space, it has all the power of a constant stimulus to sensation that physical objects have. In many Greek statues we find not only the abstract characteristics of formal beauty, to be seen also in architecture, such as harmony, balance, rhythm, but in some we find a concrete scheme of proportions, a canon of ideal relations, embodied. Yet it is also to be observed that contemporary sculpture of whatever school does not content itself with merely carrying on or reproducing those characteristics and relations, for the reason that other ideals of beauty are preferred today and are effective. If beauty were a constant quality of the object such as weight or temperature, this would not be so, for while the weight of a Greek statue remains measurable and uniform for every observer, the beauty does not, so that beauty cannot be a physical property of that statue. The beauty of the statue when and where it is realized, the subjectivist claims, is a phenomenon dependent entirely on the reactions and associations of the one who perceives its beauty or ugliness. The *Doryphorus* of Polyclitus is not the norm for all the male nudes produced today by sculptors, and the fact it is not shows that effective creation and judgment of beauty in sculpture is not uniform, so that beauty in such objects depends not on the material existence of the object but on the subjective state of the observer. The beauty of the *Doryphorus,* when and wherever it is perceived, is essentially like a dream or an error in arithmetic, for although it seems convincing to an eccentric individual, it has no necessary identical meaning to any and every other man. It seems difficult to establish that the quality felt is valid in every time and place, as are the texture of the statue's surface to any normal hand, or its resistance to a fist that strikes it.

In the case of paintings, either the frescoes of Mantegna or the canvases of Monet, we have added the obvious element of illusion so far as natural objects are represented, and there is through artifice an effect of separation in space between objects, or of the recession of space as it appears to the average eye. Illusion as the deliberate cultivation of semblances rather than realities, is closely allied with subjective states, there is an ironic pleasure felt in creating and enjoying things that seem to be what they are not, and this pleasure is akin to the pleasure felt in dream-states, which dissolve into nothingness when chilled by contact with waking reality. The illusion, whether that produced by Mantegna in his frescoes, or that of Monet in his landscapes, contributes to the beauty of such works for observers who perceive beauty in them, but the artifice is obvious and in some cases painful to those who reject them or prefer works in other styles and techniques. In any event, one cannot walk through the space depicted by Mantegna or be warmed through the vibrating sunshine reported by Monet.

But it remains true that for Polyclitus, for his school, for admirers of that work whether in classical or neoclassical times, the *Doryphorus* is an object of beauty. It may have served purposes not essentially aesthetic, but it is now more effective and impressive in its aesthetic capacity than in any other. As a product of human creativeness, in the human environment, it was infected with ethical as well as aesthetic value, but as distinguished from kind deeds or useful tools, it is significant as a realized, specific symbol, actually and predominantly in his own times, potentially at all times, and effectively for smaller numbers in other times than that in which it originated. Thus the beauty of the work of Polyclitus, to which there is ample testimony, was not a subjective error on the part of one man only, the man who produced it, or the man who enjoyed it. The numerous copies and versions in different materials which repeat the canon and pose of this figure, its reputation as carried on in classical literature and criticism, its preservation and its use as an example for students and historians of classical excellence in sculpture, all show that it has embodied beauty and aesthetic satisfaction in its own and subsequent times, although the number of those to whom it now yields such satisfaction is less than during the time when it was a most adequate symbol of beauty. It now and again may be a significant symbol but it is not for our time a completely adequate symbol. Thus the work possesses a quality or function which is not irrelevant to the environment which men live in, a world which comprises other men with minds as well as the weather.

The objections to the beauty of paintings as being destroyed when the means of the element of illusion in them is understood, depend largely on the theory of imitation in its naïve aspect. If the landscape shown us by Monet is merely a reminder to us that nature is beautiful, or if our pleasure is due entirely to the success of the artist in duplicating optical phenomena, a success which is partial and incomplete at best, then beauty ceases to be when we are undeceived, and instead of willingly consenting to an illusion of our senses, we resent it as a trick. But in works where the element of design or decoration prevails, such as paintings by the earlier Italian primitives, we can hardly be undeceived, for there is small chance for deception to begin. These things, too, when they were made, were not only significant but adequate symbols. They are significant today just as the statue by Polyclitus is, and although they were quite inadequate for men of the High Renaissance and the Baroque ages, because design and decoration are in themselves more appreciated today, they are proportionately more adequate, although not completely so.

That only what is felt by the hands is true is a mischievous prejudice, perhaps ultimately depending on the fact, that we find sensations of touch the most accurate in reporting dangers to our physical well being, although without the correlation of other senses, blind men live very restricted or dangerous lives. The individual has some sense of touch in every part of his skin and he can touch every part of his own body, but he can see only part of himself, never the back of his own head, for example, and his sense of vision is confined to one part of his body, not extended over its whole surface. Sight seems thus a less convincing and a less reliable report of what is than does touch. The persuasion of mankind, at least of Occidental man, seems to be that seeing is believing, sometimes erroneous belief, but that touching is truth. This profound discrimination between the credibility of the witnesses, sight and touch, makes us prefer things that are fixed in space, which could conceivably be touched, to things that are simply seen, and when touched may disagree with the reports of unaided sight.

Things which can be seen or heard only, and cannot in their nature ever be touched, such as the stars, molecules, a melody, or a sentence, compared with tangible facts, are relatively, in common opinion, doubtful or untrue. But modern physics, and particularly astrophysics, would still be in the stages of the Greek nature philosophy if our excessive credulity with regard to touch were not supplemented or corrected by what we learn otherwise. The vital being does not exist solely within the dimensions of touch, nor should his analysis of his own mind or his environment be so limited. There are other arts beside small sculptures which can be comprehended through one man's sense of touch within a brief time. That music or poetry can be beautiful at all shows that extension in space as verifiable by touch does not exhaust the realms of reality and of beauty. As Zeno pointed out long ago, and as speculative physics and astronomy have recently again concluded, the world cannot be described or controlled exclusively in terms of space, ignoring time, nor can time alone suffice to include all reality. And Kant showed the incongruity of absolute time and absolute space, simply demonstrating as had Zeno, that neither category is exclusively essential to human existence. So far as the controversy between the one and the many tends to assert that the oneness of things is the oneness of the space in which they exist, which the classical moralists are inclined to do, or to assert that the oneness of things is the oneness of the time in which they exist, as Oriental mystics often do, the manyness of time and movement on the one hand, or the manyness of individual objects, on the other, is denied, contrary to human experience.

Modern German Prints in a German Book

The number of people who own fine works of art is less than that of those who possess a love of beauty. Those who have inferior objects of art on their walls, such as inexpensive photographs of great paintings, are apt to turn to books about art to satisfy their interest and increase their knowledge and understanding. They may even purchase books which contain one or more original works of art, in the form of etchings or lithographs. Pfister's book on *Deutsche Graphiker der Gegenwart* is merely a convenient example of the field of art objects chosen at random to test the problem whether or not the beauty of art objects is subjective and irrelevant or objective and significant of reality.

The book mentioned contains original examples of graphic art by such representative modern artists in Germany as: Corinth, Liebermann, Käte Kollwitz, Slevogt, Meid, Kubin, Klee, Barlach, Nolde, and many others. The academic artist and the observer who shares his vision of reality will find in these pages original examples of modern distortion, perversion of the truth, degeneration in style, wilful sin against the common light of day.

The book contains an introduction, also printed. The text is written in German, and to those who are not raised in a country or home where German is customarily spoken, ability to read German and to understand the text is not spontaneous nor does it even seem to be innate. To those who speak and read German from an early age it appears to be the natural and inevitable thing to do, the only possible way of communication or expression. This contradiction in belief indicates that the name of objects in which beauty is embodied is neither *Kunst* nor *art* eternally and forever. The ability to read German and to understand the text is something that is acquired in any case, not innate, and it is merely a capacity or potential ability so long as it is not realized. On the other hand it is not an impossibility in the nature of things for one who finds it difficult, to do so by an effort.

Because I may not be able to read German or I may not meet a man who can once in a year or in a hundred thousand of my fellow-countrymen, does not prove that German is merely a name for nonsense syllables. That I do not understand the graphic art of these modern German artists or that most of my contemporary Americans do not, likewise fails to prove that their works are nonsense.

An understanding and appreciation both of language, as arbitrary but understood and effective symbols, and of art as distinguished by similar qualities, is something that is acquired, that is objective and not an insignificant or irrelevant dream of an erratic individual, that is potential or actual, but is not unreal.

The manner and style of these drawings differs from the work of the cave men of Altamira and from the draughtsmanship of the classicist Ingres. Differences in individual expression can easily be recognized, we can note the differing artistic personalities that produced them, but that does not rob them of their reality, their potency as communication from one mind to another. In the case of art objects we may feel that, in comparison with language, the work appears to be purely spontaneous and original, without any relation to anything or anybody coming before or following. But that is merely a lack of perspective, due to our lack of complete knowledge of the circumstances under which it was produced and our lack of other works from the same period or by the same artist, for comparison. We more easily realize that words express what we mean when we use them, although we hardly ever suppose that we invent the language which we speak on the spot. But in either case words and works of art are both significant of a reality, and are more or less adequate depending on the temporal and spatial context. In whatever precise sense we use the word beauty with regard to art, it at least means that beauty is not a subjective, irrelevant eccentricity on the part of the individual. But can we explain the meaning of art by the fact that artists do exist, that some individuals actualize for the rest of us potential beauty in their personal creations? Is art to be explained as the product of genius?

CHAPTER IX

IS ART THE PRODUCT OF GENIUS?

A facile explanation of the phenomena of art, so important for modern criticism that it deserves separate consideration, is the theory that art is the product of genius. Art is to be understood as the manifestation of extraordinary, almost divine, powers in a remarkable individual. Through the genius, supernatural beauty is unaccountably, but actually incarnate in human works of art.

An antagonist of the theory might even go so far as to declare that the theory of genius exemplifies the tendency of pseudo-science in this century to rationalize and justify the superstitions of the preceding age. But the fact remains that men have lived whose artistic ability was so superior to that of their contemporaries that they rose above the limitations of their times and became permanent memorials of greatness. They were men like ourselves but they were more than men; like heroes of earlier antiquity they have been raised to the station of demi-gods and their names are not to be erased. In contrast to the abstract nature of other meanings of art, this formula has a warm and optimistic direction that commends it to those who love art, and continually inspires many who strive to create it.

The word genius, but not the modern idea, derives from Roman antiquity. It was, to begin with, the designation of a protective spirit, a domestic deity, which accompanied every man as a guardian angel, a companion and better self, thus meriting the sacrifices offered on one's birthday. It is a long development, but a natural progression, which leads up to the assertion of Cousin, that: "Art is the free reproduction of beauty and the power in us capable of reproducing it is called genius." This popular philosopher, who enjoyed wide influence in the middle of the last century and whose books still find many readers, next asks: "What are the faculties which serve this free reproduction of the beautiful? The same which serve to recognize and to feel it. Taste carried to the supreme degree is genius, if you always add one more element to it." That additional element is creative power.

Cousin then indicates broad distinctions between taste and genius, between human and divine creation. He says: "Genius is essentially the power of making, of inventing, of creating. Taste is content to observe and admire. False genius, ardent and impotent imagination, consumes itself in sterile dreams and produces nothing, or at least nothing great. Genius alone has the ability to convert its conceptions into creations."

In another passage, Cousin expounds the popular doctrine further. He writes: "After all, what is a great man? The instrument of a power which is not his, for every individual power is a poor thing, and one does not surrender himself to another man, but only to the representative of a general power. . . . The particular character, the sign of a great man, is that he shall succeed. One who does not succeed is of no benefit to the world, leaves no great result, and passes on as if he had never been . . . A great man is a great man not as an individual. It is his fortune to represent better than any other man of his time the ideas of his time, its interests, its needs."

In contrast with the statesman or military leader who works with materials of exceptional complexity, who rarely has complete control over his materials, and whose results in the immediate present are not to be observed by the common eye, the artist's own hands and relatively simple materials produce things of transcendent value which can be seen by any eye. The artist's life and works thus are congenial subjects for biographical treatment, as Vasari found.

Here is sheer, unaided and simple humanity in all its familiar weakness making things of unbelievable beauty with nothing but the tools in his hands. The genius, as artist, reassures us that the individual man can reach unique heights beyond ordinary faithful effort, and the proofs of that conviction remain in specific, substantial objects.

The external analysis of philosophical systems suggests that their plausibility depends on a striking analogy with some significant situation or datum of experience, around which a logical structure is erected, employing the greatest economy in using unprovable assumptions, often concealed, to hold the structure together. Genius, as a starting point, was not far from the minds of the romantic philosophers; in Von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious* it was later adopted as the central analogy.

Genius and the Romanticists

In a passage intended to be ironic, relating to the German romantic school of philosophy, at its height from 1770 to 1805, Royce indicates the importance of the concept of genius in the romanticists' eyes: "Nature is . . . a work of unconscious art, a form which the great Genius of the world gives to his experiences. God is an artist, a poet, who pours out the wealth of his beautiful life in all the world of sense. Of this God, we too are embodiments; only we are not blind, as his other works are. We are conscious, and therefore it is that we see in sense-forms, in nature, our own ideas crystallized . . . To understand the difference between organic and inorganic matter, you have again to study first your own inner consciousness, and to examine its various stages, as they lead up from disorganized sensations to clear and organic reason. For the forms of matter in the outer world are symbolic, are precisely analogous, stage for stage, to these processes of the inner life . . . Artists are often unconscious philosophers, but great philosophers, from this romantic point of view, are never more than consummate artists. Feeling is an indispensable guide to reason. We should never know God did we not share his nature in our emotions. He is the only many-sided and infinite genius. We appreciate him because we young romanticists are geniuses ourselves."

The adoption of a belief in genius as an axiom of social science creates an interesting situation. If the genius is so important to the romantic philosophy and the hope of social progress, the loss of a potential genius is a catastrophe of the first order. It becomes necessary to devise methods for capturing genius while still very young and insuring conditions for development, which will not prevent incipient genius from attaining fruition. Social engineering demands that the genetic traits of youthful genius should be established.

In California research has been directed to that end. The mental and physical traits of a thousand outstanding schoolchildren have been tabulated, analyzed and correlated. It is admitted in the preface to *Genetic Studies of Genius* that various factors have hindered the prosecution of the fundamental studies until 1925. One of them is "the tardy birth of the biological sciences, particularly genetics, psychology and education." In addition to the survey of a thousand gifted children, a study has also been made, according to recently developed but now familiar methods, of the early mental traits of three hundred celebrated geniuses, by the same group of research workers. On the basis of the literature about them, the three hundred were assigned intelligence quotients and awarded other symbols of mental aptitude.

There is abundant evidence, however, that two aspects of the theory of genius are implicit in popular thought today and are relied upon by educational experts. One is; potential genius is so widespread that almost anybody, given the opportunity and preparation, could be a leader of surpreme ability towering over all his fellows. If by this is meant merely that the general average of human excellence is far below what it might be through more intelligent conservation and adaptation of human abilities, it would at least be a consistent platform. But simple arithmetic is against the presumption that every boy can be President at the same time as several million other boys. The same objection applies to the possibility of several million Beethovens.

A second aspect of the current theory of genius is the belief that since the content or intrinsic value of the subject studied in preparation for leadership in action is of relatively little importance in comparison with method and technique, it is hardly worth while to study anything, but to study how to study and how to do. We learn by doing, so why study history, philosophy, any body of scientific laws or historical facts for the intrinsic merit of their subject matter? Napoleon, it may therefore be supposed, became an Emperor, not by studying antiquated military tactics or the history of social institutions. He went into action, won battles, and placed himself in a position where he could exercise his knowledge of method by supervising pedants in tasks assigned them by himself.

Among the followers of decadent Buddhism in Tibet, a method opposite to that of the education experts' tests is followed, in choosing a successor to a deceased Great Lama. The Great Lama also learns how to be an effective genius by doing. But instead of rising to a position of leadership by his own efforts, the principle that any boy, properly educated through actions and not mere ideas, can become an incarnate divinity, is rigidly and logically pursued. When one of the Great Lamas dies, the names of all the male babies born after the Lama's death are presented to the Great Lama who survives, in order to discover the human body in which the heavenly being has now taken up his dwelling place. Of these, three are finally selected, one name is solemnly drawn by lot, and that child becomes a genius for Tibet by the process of living and acting as one for the remainder of his life.

Characteristics of Genius

Altogether there has been a good deal of investigation spent on genius by various special sciences and a vast amount of literary discourse. Carlyle is one of those most responsible for maintaining the doctrine, with all its romantic specifications, alive in the English speaking world. "Genius, Poet, do we know what these words mean? An inspired Soul once more vouchsafed to us, direct from Nature's own fire-heat, to see the Truth, and speak it and do it." In another passage, Carlyle wrote: "Genius is the 'inspired gift of God.' It is the clearer presence of God Most High in a man. Dim, potential, in all men, in this man it has become actual. So says John Milton, who ought to be a judge; so answer him the Voices of all Ages and of all Worlds."

However, the universality of this admirable and divine power is attested by Mary Austin in a volume called *Everyman's Genius*. She tells us how we may all acquire it. "Seeking for it, the individual does not so much seek to add to himself something from the outside as to uncover that which is within. It is, as a matter of fact, impossible to think of a man as cut off from his psychic past any more than he is from his physical past. To acquire genius, therefore, all that he has to do is to extricate the mechanism of the deep-self, in which the past registers, from the inhibitions imposed upon it by misadventures of the conscious life."

A treasury of golden sentences embodying the concept of genius is F. H. Hayward's *Professionalism and Originality*. His term for genius is "the living man." The genius feels an imperative vocation, witness Socrates, Joan of Arc, Malebranche, Ruskin, Descartes, all of whom said they were acting through an inner compulsion. Luther put it: "Ich kann nicht anders." Genius is suddenly inspired, the process is very different from that described in treatises on logic. He quotes: "Napoleon said that the fate of battles was the result of an instant, of a latent thought; the decisive moment appeared, the spark burst forth, and one was victorious." It may seem unfortunate, but it is nevertheless true, according to Hayward, that genius is often megalomaniac, filled with conceit and consciousness of authority. Dante, for example, called himself the sixth greatest poet of the world long before the *Divine Comedy* was completed. Hegel went so far as to claim: "I may say with Christ that not only do I teach truth but that I am myself truth."

The puzzling contrasts and inconsistencies in the character of genius warrant the statement that: "There are elements of unaccountability, freshness and elfishness about him." In this he is far superior to the professional man who instead adheres to dull precedent. Although genius is precocious, the man of genius is also chronically youthful. Geniuses produce creative work at an advanced age, as may be seen in the cases of Plato, Bellini, Michelangelo, Titian, Hals, Goethe, Verdi, and Ibsen. Genius is, furthermore, unconventional because its authority derives from a source superior to convention.

Beside the other phenomena of genius, the sorrow and sense of failure felt by the genius is one that must be mentioned. The words of the Prophet Jeremiah are those of a frustrate genius. Wagner said: "In my inmost heart I know I am a bungler and an absolute failure." The distance that separates genius from the common sort of men makes genius solitary and miserable. On this topic the words of Schopenhauer are reproduced by Hayward: "If I could only satisfy my desire to look upon this race of toads and vipers as my equals, it would be a consolation to me." In the face of such, the appeal of conscious genius is naturally to posterity.

Is Genius Hereditary?

Those who find an explanation of art in the nature of genius rather than in the nature of the works of genius have formulated several subordinate problems. One may be stated in this form: Is genius hereditary? An opposed point of view frames a second question: Is genius psychopathic? Still a third problem which has attracted able investigators assumes this shape: Does environment alone account for genius?

Against the smug determinism of Spencer, William James argued effectively in his essay, "Great Men and their Environment." Social changes, according to Spencer, are irrespective of persons, and independent of individual control. They are due to the environment, to the circumstances, the physical geography, the ancestral conditions, the increasing experience of our outer relations. But such vision, James contended, is outside the human ken, the human mind really has no power of universal intuition, and it can be efficient only by narrowing its field of observation.

The determinists, including Taine, Spencer, and Allen, claim that: "Great men so-called are only historical labels, they give their names to what happens." Schopenhauer, Carlyle, Nietzsche, on the other hand, reveal that genius is without parallel, inexplicable either by heredity or environment. Ribot also points out that in the periods and countries productive of genius, many individuals have been exposed to the same influences, but the number of geniuses has remained small. Every genius who revolutionizes his world by something new has been opposed on the ground that what he did was either false or evil. But an environment of other men subjected to the same forces as the genius, should have welcomed what is the product of one of their own number, with the same needs and possibilities of satisfaction.

James asserts that a belief in antecedent causes, such as environment, is not the goal or consummation of modern science, but its initial postulate. In fact, "if anything is humanly certain it is that the great man's society, properly so called, does not make him before he can remake it." Nor would James admit that direct divine interference is the only alternative to the determinist's particular kind of causation. That men of the past and their achievements were fundamentally not incompatible with their environment is no explanation. It is a trivial platitude. If, however, by environment is meant the general and orderly sequence of physical phenomena, it is not untrue, it is only "the vague Asiatic profession of belief in an all-enveloping fate, which certainly need not plume itself on any specially scientific character."

Instead of being the products of their environment, quite the contrary is asserted by James. The human environment is what it is because of the activities of other, earlier geniuses. "The fermentive influence of geniuses must be admitted as at any rate one factor in the changes that constitute social evolution. The community may develop in many ways. The accidental presence of this or that ferment decides in what way it shall evolve."

This is the point of view brought to bear by James also in solving the problem of freedom and necessity, of free will versus predestination or other types of determinism. After Voltaire, he believed, Peter the Hermit would no longer be possible. Western Europe could not ever again choose to follow that type of leader. "Just so the social surroundings of the past and present hour exclude the possibility of accepting certain contributions from individuals. . . . But they do not positively define what contributions shall be accepted, for in themselves they are powerless to fix what the nature of the individual offerings shall be."

Against the fallacies of Spencer, James cites the methods of biology. "Darwin's first achievement was to show the utter insignificance in amount of these changes produced by direct adaptation, the immensely greater mass of changes being produced by internal molecular accidents, of which we know nothing. His next achievement was to define the true problem with which we have to deal when we study the effects of the visible environment on the animal. The problem is simply this: Is the environment more likely to preserve or to destroy him, on account of this or that peculiarity with which he may be born?"

In the history of art, it is interesting to show the compatibility of the works produced with the environment. But here again the biographic point of view is of more than dramatic interest. If attention is confined to the sequence and style of the works of art themselves, it is possible to point out how the significant moment of each great style in post-Renaissance art is the personal achievement of an individual artist. A study of sources and origins does not succeed in concealing this situation. Art can satisfactorily be studied as the creation or determination of a style by a great master. We can then observe its variations and adaptations until another movement emerges, with its new forms established by another master.

Even though the nature and causes of genius, as popularly conceived, may be dubious in fact and inexpedient as explanation, such artists are concrete personalities; they furnish a dramatic narrative, the record of their lives remains not so much in their words and in words about them, as in their works of art.

A more circumscribed and apparently more scientific approach to the problem of genius is intended through the question of heredity. *Hereditary Genius* is the title of Galton's celebrated work. If the superb gifts of genius are so exceptional in quality, are they the result of mere chance or is blood relationship, biological continuity on a restricted scale, the controlling factor? If the color of guinea pigs' coats depends on the color of their ancestors' in a sequence ascertained by biological science, does the genuis of Napoleon, of Goethe, of Rubens depend on the same factors? The judges of England are exceptionally able men, those who have sat in the high courts of justice through the centuries constitute the highest degree of legal talent, of judicial genius. By prolonged investigation, Galton discovered that most of the judges were related to one another, in the period which he surveyed, from 1660 to 1865. Athletes represent an entirely different sort of achievement. Galton searched the records of the champion wrestlers of the

North Country over a long period. Again, blood relationship prevailed. In the introduction to his book, Galton had referred to the theories and practices of those who breed horses and dogs. His investigations seemed to him to establish conclusively his initial purpose: "I propose to show in this book that a man's natural abilities are derived by inheritance under exactly the same limitations as are the form and physical features of the whole organic world."

But the prime difficulty of those who deal with genius is to define the type and degree of superiority which constitutes genius. The excessive vagueness and inclusiveness of that, the causes and conditions of which are to be determined, hinders its use as a meaning of art as well as its susceptibility to scientific investigation. Speaking of the eugenists, Mencken says: "In none of their books have I ever found a clear definition of the superiority they talk about so copiously. At one time they seem to identify it with high intelligence, at another time with character—i. e. moral stability—and yet another time with mere fame—i. e. luck. Was Napoleon I. a superior man, as I am privately inclined to believe, along with many of the eugenists? Then so was Aaron Burr, if in less measure. Was Paul of Tarsus? Then so was Brigham Young. Were the Gracchi? Then so were Karl Marx and William Jennings Bryan."

If the qualities and abilities which are useful to society vary at different moments, it is idle to breed human beings to produce types whose serviceability has vanished before they come to maturity, for nobody can anticipate future social needs with sufficient simplicity and accuracy to define specifically the precise type that will be required. Vague future needs demanding indefinable types of genius are probably just as well satisfied through accidental matings.

Another general objection to the theories of the eugenists and others who draw up specifications for future genius and devise a technique for guaranteeing the supply is, that the world never contained enough different ancestors. With a small territory, undisturbed by immigration or invasion on any large scale, with social classes relatively stable, it would have been strange if the judges of England had not been in some degree related. It is well known that during the nineteenth century populations have vastly increased, in other words people born in that century had fewer different ancestors than the preceding. But, disregarding this situation, progressive doubling, without including relatives in any degree, in the family trees of any group of men such as the judges, would in a few generations reach a number exceeding not only the population of England but of the world. In England, to have the blood of William the Conqueror in one's veins is no assurance of pre-eminent ability. By this time it is extremely probable that every single inhabitant of native stock has some of it, and it is not confined to any known family.

Is Genius Psychopathic?

The theory of hereditary genius tends to indicate that if you have genius, it is due to the selective matings of your ancestors; that ordinary red blood cannot reach such heights unless there is a strain of blue from successful ancestors; and that to fill the world's future need of geniuses, the present supply must be kept in the family. Psychiatry takes another view. In spite of your inferiority; indeed, because of it, you too may be a genius, because most geniuses have been notable deviations from the normal or average human being of sound mental and physical health.

The aberrations of men of extraordinary ability were noted by Aristotle, Seneca and others in ancient times, and there are numerous modern books dealing with the eccentricities and abnormalities of genius. Moreau de Tours defined the great man's special talents in this fashion: "Genius is a neurosis." Lombroso sought to identify this neurosis as a form of epilepsy.

In *The Man of Genius,* Lombroso like others who have treated this topic, feels that his interpretation should be useful in explaining art and artists. He says: "What I have hitherto written may, I hope (while remaining within the limits of psychological observation), afford an experimental starting-point for a criticism of artistic and literary, sometimes also of scientific, creations."

In the conclusion to his book Lombroso summarizes his position: "Between the physiology of the man of genius, therefore, and the pathology of the insane, there are many points of coincidence; there is even actual continuity. This fact explains the frequent occurrence of madmen of genius, and men of genius who have become insane, having, it is true, characteristics special to themselves, but capable of being resolved into exaggerations of those of genius pure and simple. The frequency of delusions of their multiform character of degenerative characteristics, of the loss of affectivity, of heredity, more particularly in the children of inebriate, imbecile, idiotic or epileptic parents, and, above all, the peculiar character of inspiration, show that genius is a degenerative psychosis of the epileptic group. This supposition is confirmed by the frequency of a temporary manifestation of genius in the insane, and by the new group of mattoids to whom disease gives all the semblance of genius, without its substance."

Since the development of radical movements in modern art, to compare the productions of celebrated modern artists with those of the insane has become a popular diversion, to which alienists have willingly lent themselves. Dr. C. Floyd Haviland, of the Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane on Ward's Island, is quoted as saying: "My visits to art galleries frequently turn into laboratory work in psychiatrics. . . . Many paintings I have seen in art exhibitions might easily have been produced at Ward's Island or in other asylums. On the other hand, a considerable number of the drawings and paintings turned out on the Island would not seem particularly conspicuous in various Fifth Avenue galleries."

Genius in Modern Psychologies

As James showed, the specific causes of exceptional ability lie in a region which is not accessible to us, and the specific occasions on which exceptional ability will make itself manifest and be recognized cannot be defined or anticipated. Yet many of the weaknesses of the newer psychologies are in part due to concern with a concept whose contents are inscrutable and whose occurrence is unpredictable.

The behaviorists will undertake to mold any given embryonic individual into a genius, although the master molder does not possess a mind in the ordinary sense. According to the behaviorists the molder himself is only a mass of automatic, conditioned reactions; there is no thought, only movements of muscles. The geneticists would breed geniuses like race horses, although the evidence they offer is not scientific, it is not even legal. The star case of the eugenists in America is the Edwards clan, descended from Elizabeth Tuttle, the first wife of Richard Edwards, whose progeny have been so distinguished. The geneticists call her a "marvellous girl," but H. H. Newman of Chicago University looked into her history and found that she was hardly a logical source of greatness. She herself was divorced for habitual immorality, while her brother and sister were guilty of conspicuous murders. The Freudians have found consolation and justification in the sexual histories of geniuses; in the analysis of the soul of Leonardo da Vinci, for example, they find that sexual repressions and abnormalities account for his exceptional achievements. The implication is that if genius is the victim of suppressed complexes, it can be avoided by releasing inhibitions; or, on the other hand, aberrations are justifiable as potential sources of genius.

Sociology is also perplexed by genius. How can genius be both aristocratic and democratic? The genius is aristocratic in the sense that he is vastly superior to the ordinary man, infrequent, and scarce. Democracy, however, postulates equality of gifts, fraternity in sharing their results, and liberty to exploit them without unjust hindrance. Todd's answer in his *Theories of Social Progress* is no solution at all for it merely repeats the original question in an affirmative form. He says: "We are all members of a magnificent aristocracy whose business it is to serve and not to rule."

In relation to works of art creator and observer have a sensation of freedom and superiority. The genius who achieves great things is also superior to familiar limitations and his freedom seems to be more durable. On the one hand there is subjective freedom and on the other objective success. In the concept of genius objective success is, however, improperly made an integral characteristic of subjective superiority.

Goya, an Example of Genius

Without pursuing this type of analysis further, let us consider art works which are historically relevant to the principle of genius as the meaning of art, and some others chosen at random. In 1797, during the period that the principle of genius was most favored, Goya produced a portrait, now in the Museum of the Hispanic Society of America in New York of *Doña María del Pilar Teresa Cayetana de Silva Álvarez de Toledo, Thirteenth Duchess of Alba.* The beauty of this painting is not that of classical sculpture or Florentine painting, but it vividly presents the subject's piquant personality, its background is romantic and inspired by emotion, it warmly appeals to the poetic imagination. It is vital and original.

In this work Goya realizes before our eyes the capacity that we all have in slighter degree to imagine, invent, and create beautiful things, in a surpassing moment of experience. The artist did not need to sublimate his passion for the Duchess or to produce a painted substitute for his dreams. During his life time, Goya enjoyed all the fruits of success within an artist's reach and many that are usually restricted to other ranks and professions. Since his death he has been an invigorating influence on the art of painting and his fame continues to grow. But Goya was not concerned with the reasons why or how he was a great artist after he had been recognized as one. His life and career manifested the will in its unceasing struggles and inability to secure permanent satisfactions. His works reveal ordered reason in the adaptation of means to end, in technique regulated to the expression of his own artistic vision, in a rational relation between his methods and ideas and those of his predecessors and contemporaries.

Few if any of Goya's ancestors were distinguished and few of his descendants. But that may be because opportunities for abilities, in their ways as great as his, were never presented, or his strain may not be recorded in legal documents, so that his blood in other persons of eminence is not to be identified as such. Goya's own rating in youth, for mental characteristics and aptitudes, might perhaps not have been high, and in his career he displayed a callousness to the rights of others and his moral obligations to them, which would have placed him low on an ethical scale.

At any rate, Goya's aesthetic judgment was never tested in a laboratory to determine the measure of his art talent. Had the provincials of his day tried him by defective and obsolete art material, almost certainly he would have failed. Supposing he had been successful in passing such tests, it would have signified that he precociously approved of styles whose vogue had waned by the time he was born, and this attitude would be the greatest possible handicap to him in achieving the success appropriate to a genius.

If Goya learned by doing, the process is not clear, for he was exposed for years to the academic methods of the studio conducted by Luzán y Martínez, the models held up for his imitation by brother-in-law Bayeu were sterile neoclassical or baroque reminiscences. He was remarkably tardy in devoting himself professionally to painting, but when he seriously dedicated himself to art as a means of self-advancement, his success was not slow in arriving. This success was, in style, a definite revolt against all that he had been taught and much of what he had previously done; it is chiefly of value on that account.

Goya was no doubt precocious in that he gave early signs of a desire to draw, but so do most other normal children. He did not develop early; quite the contrary. He did not extricate the mechanism of his deep-self from the inhibitions imposed on it by misadventures of his conscious life, to repeat phrases used by Miss Austin. His life and actions show that he was remarkably free from repressions and inhibitions; he got about everything he wanted and he did almost anything he felt moved to do. What literary and biographical evidence we possess indicates that Goya had many of the traits of character and endured the sufferings which Hayward tells us are the lot of the living man. That evidence also shows most of them were due to his extraordinary egoism, that he was the victim of nervous disorders after middle life, at which time he became deaf, that he attained the station of genius in spite of and not because of them.

Some of the Aragonese boys born about the same time as Goya who chanced to be disciplined in an art school could have produced a portrait but little different in technique and quality from another example of Goya's art in the Museum of the Hispanic Society in New York, the portrait of *Don Manuel Lapeña, Marquis of Bondad Real.* The expectations current in Goya's day of what a fashionable military portrait should be are fulfilled in this work. But while it is not unlike the portrait of the Duchess in some of its superficial characteristics, it is profoundly different in those points of quality which make that gay lady's portrait a masterpiece.

Goya's masterpieces cannot wholly be explained as automatic products of his environment, nor can his less successful works. It is no difficult task, however, to show Goya's deep influence on such men as López, Lucas, and Zuloaga in Spain; on Delacroix and Manet, in France; on Sargent and Henri in America.

The eugenists find no more valid evidence of their theories of genius in Goya than they do elsewhere. If the blood of the Cid flowed in his veins, by that time it flowed in those of his models, too. On the other hand, while Goya had some of the stigma associated with insanity when it is not triumphant over the environment, his shrewd self-seeking and his able calculations to assure his own advancement tell us that Goya had intelligence in its current sense. The definition of insanity as well as of genius requires greater precision. But many of Goya's etchings show a pre-occupation with abnormal and morbid subjects, he practices distortion and inaccuracy in drawing them which would assign him a low place on the intelligence scale if his mental powers were to be judged by the accuracy and completeness of his representations. If lurking repressions due to the superstitious belief in witchcraft during his youth, and hatred of an opulent, ignorant clergy, are the source of his genius in these prints, it seems strange that hundreds of other artists were impressed by the same forces and must have had the same emotional response, but they did not become known as geniuses.

Indeed, the precise causes of the abilities which in Goya flowered into genius are, as far as we are concerned, inextricable. It is plausible, to be sure, that a man of the sort whose sum of traits and actions constitute the individual Goya should exist in the physical and spiritual environment which we can establish as the Spain of his day. It is reasonable to see in him the product of factors whose relative strength we can estimate generally. But to show that Goya was not a miracle, violating the laws of nature, is not to explain Goya as a genius in art. It is precisely the origin of those abilities in which he excelled his contemporaries and the turn of events which made it possible for him to succeed that constitute the problem of his genius.

Genius and Gothic Sculpture

In the Hispanic Museum there are also some polychrome sculptured madonnas, carved in wood, dating from the Gothic period. These are apt to attract our random attention as we walk through the exhibition galleries. Judged by the criteria employed in estimating the worth of primitive and expressionistic modern art, these madonnas are beautiful. They find a justified place in a museum also as historical relics. They come from a distant past and from a foreign land, but through them we can behold in concrete forms what they held to be most precious, most desirable in a world of ideal forms which they sought to realize. Art as the product of genius, if art is the product of genius, is to be found here.

But who was the genius? We do not know, any more than the general public knows who builds the skyscrapers of today a few years after they have been erected, and it is probable that the people who first loved these statues did not greatly care who made them. Nobody can tell, then, whether the genius who wrought one of these beautiful things was of distinguished lineage like the judges of the high court in England; nobody can tell whether or not he was psychopathic. If any one says that these works illustrate the genius of the age in which they were produced, he is a heretic, for he has departed from the authorized dogma of genius; the orthodox have always held that genius is power to produce works of beauty, actively and successfully realized by an individual.

Either way we take it, genius is unsatisfactory in telling us the meaning of art. If we assert that works of art are significant as the result of genius, we cannot explain works which are beautiful but are not the works of genius. If we assert that a genius is the sort of man who produces great works, we are checkmated by chance, for a man who is a genius must be successful and a man's abilities have no necessary relation to his opportunity to exercise them. Furthermore, even the works of a genius are sometimes masterpieces and sometimes not. Genius is a popular concept but its constituent contradictions make it very nearly useless as the meaning of art. Disappointed in the concept of genius as an explanation of art, sober and patient minds have, on the one hand, probed the mechanism of the mind, and on the other, have sought a formula free from the logical inconsistencies that are essential to the principle of genius. Psychologists suggest that we can rest in an affirmative reply to the question, Is empathy the meaning of art? Logicians, however, indicate that our inquiry is settled when we agree that expression is the meaning of art.

CHAPTER X

IS EMPATHY THE MEANING OF ART, OR IS EXPRESSION?

A popular meaning of art, supported by influential critics and psychologists as well as historians, is that called empathy in English, or *Einfühlung* in German. This principle stresses movement, the sympathetic motor activity of the observer, acting in concert with the creative activity of the artist. It holds that instead of being an act of passive contemplation, it is a vital activity that we call creation or enjoyment of art. Instead of being a self-sufficient and self-contained process or state, art is a stimulus to life, it heightens vitality. The meaning of art, therefore, is a heightened vitality.

As this point of view holds that appreciation of art is based on the empathic response of the observer, practical criticism is the analysis and evaluation of such a reaction, and the meaning of specific objects of art is the precise quality and character of the empathic responses which it stimulates or stirs up. As one immediately notes, this view is primarily psychological, and not only that, but it emphasizes the motor aspect of psychological mechanism and process. It is not the inherent quality of the object which constitutes the aesthetic relation, but a special sort of activity with regard to the art object. It may be bent in the direction of a refined behaviorism and analyzed as a particular kind of muscular activity, or beauty may be considered a metaphysical essence whose effective presence is realized and verified by the distinguishing traits which separate this, the aesthetic, from other kinds of activity.

Origin and Development of Empathy

Empathy appears to have originated with Lotze and Vischer, but it was given the new name of *Einfühlung* by Lipps, and it received the honor of a novel English term at the hands of Professor Titchener. About the same time that Lipps was engaged in publishing his development of this principle, it was independently set forth by the brilliant English writer whose pen-name was Vernon Lee, collaborating with her friend C. Anstruther-Thomson.

The Doric column is the standard illustration of the principle. A column seems to rise, it seems to have a definite activity of its own, it appears to be pushing and bearing up against the load which it supports, the work which it accomplishes appears to be done, as are human accomplishments, through effort exerted. An exponent of the theory asserts: "The column seems to brace itself and raise itself, that is to say, to proceed in the way in which I do when I pull myself together and raise myself, or remain thus tense and erect, in opposition to the natural inertness of my body. It is impossible for me to be aware of the column without this activity seeming to exist directly in the column of which I am aware."

The essence of Lipps' idea is given by him in this fashion: "Briefly, in the act of empathy I do not supply any form to the spiral or to the manner in which it seems to have been constructed, but it is the forces through which its form has originated to which I attach this personal quality. Inasmuch as this personal quality is added to the form of the definite mechanical process or is incorporated in it, this quality naturally appears as a quality of a mechanical process which is spatially so constituted as to form a spiral."

Anticipating in large measure the narrower dogmatism of the behaviorists, Karl Groos and some other psychologists noted that when we experience aesthetic or other objects there occur slight but significant motions of the muscular organization. He thereupon elaborated his interpretation of the theory in a physiological direction and incurred the hostility of Lipps who leaned towards a more metaphysical or abstract exposition of the principle. Laboratory technicians have confirmed and developed the initial observations of Groos, but the contention of Lipps, that we are not conscious of our bodily movements during the aesthetic experience, has also been verified repeatedly.

It was a commonplace of earlier criticism that curves are more agreeable to the eye than straight or broken lines, because they are easier for the eye to follow. But laboratory investigation has proved the fallacy of that view, for the eyes have been photographed in motion while following curves and perceiving rounded objects and it has been found that in perceiving curves as well as straight lines, the eye moves in a series of short, zig-zag motions, and the path of perception as an act of visual motor activity is one which has no correspondence to the difference between curved lines and straight. To avoid the difficulty of this situation, it is asserted by advocates of empathy that our eyes and our bodies need not describe a spiral in order to empathize ourselves into its sequence of rising curves; "a tendency to move any part of the body that is capable of moving in the way suggested is sufficient."

This theory was adopted by Berenson in his earliest critical handbooks, and although some of his later writing seems to involve an advance beyond it, he apparently has not recanted or abandoned that principle, for it would require a rather thorough rewriting of his popular manuals if the theory that was popular when they were written were eliminated in favor of one enjoying wider popular approval today. His acceptance of empathy, once a striking innovation in writing about art, is exemplified by such statements as this: "To realize the play of the muscles everywhere, to get the full sense of the various pressures and resistances, to receive the direct inspiration of the energy expended, we must have the nude; for here alone can we watch those tautnesses of muscle and those stretchings and relaxings and ripplings of skin which, translated into similar strains in our own person, make us fully realize movement." His familiar stressing of "tactile" values, a very broad and undiscriminating term derived from the principle of empathy, is a familiar one in academic circles today, due to his advocacy of it.

Empathy attaches special value to the direction of lines, an aspect of the object which is valuable where linear definition is characteristic of the period or school that produced the art object. It finds opportunity to apply its reasoning in such cases as the rising tracery of the Gothic vault, the sinuous curves of a Botticelli design, in the more naturalistic drawings of a Japanese artist. So far as movement, indicated by lines, represents or stimulates our sense of movement and action, and does so agreeably, empathy has a specious illustration in such instances. But, unless the theory of technique is also introduced, and we are to empathize with the specific movements of the artist, as well, we are at a loss to account for much of modern sculpture and architecture with its emphasis on the cubic and rectangular. Furthermore, in periods or schools of art where the interest is in tone or value, rather than line, the explanation fails to convince. In Chinese landscape painting, in the impressionism of mass to be found in Velazquez and Manet, or the impressionism of contrasted color characteristic of Monet, it is hard to show that the aesthetic quality of the work is due to any such pursuit of the curved line by the eye. Since Berenson limited his attention to the High Renaissance as the latest period he authoritatively considered, other ways of suggesting movement, in addition to clear lines and distinguishable masses, did not have to be considered for their bearing on his explanation, nor did the presence of impressionistic and expressionistic elements in Titian and Tintoretto seriously disturb the facile and popular psychological theory which he offered. This meaning was, to be sure, a welcome compensation for the sterile transcendental or ethical criteria which prevailed before Berenson's re-direction of English criticism, but it has proved an insufficient standard by which to test the older masters of a time subsequent to that where he left off, and it quite fails to comprehend much of the art of our own day.

Langfeld, another exponent of empathy, says that our most vivid experience of empathy is when we perceive unbalanced objects that may fall at any moment, such as acrobats balancing one another at the end of a pole, and our empathic response is there of an unpleasant nature. But it is strange to find that the most acute instance of the process by which art is to be explained is the perception of a negative value rather than of a positive one, a case of pain rather than pleasure. The same author strives to distinguish between empathy and sympathy, without much success.

Vernon Lee on Empathy

More searching and on the whole more acceptable is the version of empathy offered by Vernon Lee, its originator in English theory. Her exposition is more adequate than that offered by Langfeld and other inheritors of the teaching of Lipps and Groos. She begins by inquiring on what occasions we use the word *beautiful,* concluding that it implies on our part an attitude of satisfaction and preference. As distinguished from the good and the useful, which signify satisfactory in the way of use and advantage, beautiful implies an attitude of preference, but not an attitude of present or future turning to our purposes. The satisfaction and advantage of the beautiful is of a contemplative kind. This does not mean that aesthetic appreciation is a disinterested interest, because such appreciation implies enjoyment and is so far the very reverse of disinterested. Nor does it mean that art and its enjoyment are a kind of play, for the players themselves are in an eminently practical state of mind, opposed to contemplation.

Vernon Lee then distinguishes between a thing and an aspect. A thing means its qualities and our reactions, not only present and actual, but potential as well. But an aspect is all there. Thus the beautiful refers to satisfaction in contemplating aspects, not things. Shape, specifically, is an aspect over and above our sensations. Because shape is a perception, the satisfaction or dissatisfaction we derive from it is concerned with our own activities. Since it is attention and memory that distinguish perception from sensation, we can assert that an aspect consists of sensations grouped together into relations by our active, our remembering and foreseeing perception. When the material stimulations from the outside world are such as to force all normally constituted minds to the same series and combinations of expressive acts, form or shape takes an objective existence. The attribution of quality to an object, thus, is really a merging of the activities of the subject in the object. This situation becomes clearer when we attribute activity to inert objects, saying, for example, that the mountain rises, and it is a situation which is essential to appreciation. Because the object remains unmoved but seems to be always moving, art thence possesses a reiterative character, and exists *sub specie aeternitatis*. In this exposition of empathy as stated by Vernon Lee, an attempt has been made to adhere to her own language, without intruding interpretive alterations.

The fundamental difficulty is her abolition of all qualities as essentially grammatical and customary errors, on the ground that the activity of the subject toward an object is what really is true. This view would make the humble verb *is,* together with all adjectives and predicates, a philosophical error. Her abstract justification of empathy is thus another example of the effort to solve the problem of predication by reducing it to an illusory phase of voluntary activity. It is, therefore, unnecessary to examine her psychology to discover whether there is such a thing as a "normally constituted mind" known to history, and whether aspects are nothing but grouped sensations.

We may say that a mountain or a Doric column rises, and it may add to our aesthetic pleasure to do so, but we are always aware that, in truth, the mountain and the column are not rising. In this instance we are, as so often in poetry, finding beauty in an analogy, or, more specifically, a metaphor. But there are other kinds of analogies besides those of motion, and there are other instances of beauty beside those which are either in fact or by illusion exclusively the results of our movements. Empathy, indeed, seems to find its basis in a keen appreciation of the artist's creative activity, sympathetically reproduced in the observer's imagination, and to find its justification in taking metaphors as statements of fact, rather than significant analogies. This theory dares too much in the realm of metaphysics, while at the same time it is fantastically literal-minded.

Empathy, like Santayana's definition of beauty as pleasure attributed to the object instead of to the feeling subject, illustrates a standard method of escape from philosophical dilemmas. A paradox combines contradictory terms in a single proposition, and a formula or phrase, may, by also including within its limits those contradictory factors which, in fact, constitute the problem to be solved, be dealt with and accepted as its solution. The general problem of beauty as a quality is this: How can objects in themselves seem to possess qualities, when qualities seem also something created by minds? Empathy solves the difficulty only speciously when it claims to find an answer by saying, beauty is a quality which is felt to be *in* the object, but which is really felt *into* the object by the mind, and that a good name for this paradoxical situation is empathy.

To catch the popular imagination, or at least to gain wide attention, a philosophical theory must have a slogan or an easily remembered formula. A newly-coined word, like *empathy,* if it can be given currency, is almost as good as a slogan, for it is really a condensed formula, and without such an elaboration the word has no meaning. On the other hand, it is almost if not quite impossible for a philosophic theory or system to enjoy serious attention unless it is based on some easily understood and convincing physical analogy. If a lecturer wishes to convince his hearers of the truth of this theory he will find it easy to persuade the majority by inquiring, What is a spiral? Rarely does any listener in the audience have an exact, and satisfactory definition of a spiral at the tip of his tongue. But they can all describe a spiral in the air with their index fingers, and after a slight pause, or under the strain of trying to invent a definition on the spot, almost any listener will do so. Using the spiral as an example, and going on to the illustration of the mountain and the column, the average audience that has never heard of it before can be converted to this view in about an hour.

Croce: Art is Expression

A close rival of the empathy theory as an explanation of art is the formula of Croce: art is the expression of impressions, beauty is expression. This theory is founded on a familiar concept in physics, that of force or motion. A rubber ball thrown against a wall (impression) will rebound (expression). Because Croce so qualifies his definition of the term that it has no necessary or clear relation to the term as ordinarily used, does not hinder people from eagerly adopting expression as their watch-word in art. Added to this initial failure to grasp just what the philosopher means by his term, further confusion is created by the existence of a movement or tendency in art called expressionism. The vogue of Croce's view was assisted by its generally extreme character. Empathy was a new word; if empathy with precise meaning previously unknown, is made equivalent to the meaning of art, there seemed no possibility of proving the contrary, since it was so by definition. If it is found out that there are such things as metaphors of motion, and if empathy means one class of metaphors sublimated into a universal explanation, then the metaphor solves all difficulties because it is the meaning of art. The extreme character of Croce's definition is quite opposite in direction, for it is distinguished by its inclusiveness rather than its arbitrary exclusiveness. We all know what expression is, so that if art also is expression, and dialectic fences can be erected to protect the term, we know what art means because we know what expression is at the very start. We are not surprised when we find a popular introduction to art appreciation beginning with a chapter on "The Impulse to Expression."

More responsible writers, such as Parker in his *Analysis of Art,* display their attempt to incorporate Croce in a synthetic system of selections from all the best philosophers of the moment. Parker indicates that his views are a compound of: 1. the play-theory (Schiller, Spencer, Groos); 2. empathy (Herder, Lipps, Volkelt, Lee); 3. expression (Croce); 4. significant form (Bell); and 5. Freud's psychoanalysis (Prescott).

According to Croce, human knowledge consists of knowledge of things or images, and knowledge of the relations of things or concepts. While the latter are thought or conceived, the former are seen or perceived. The first kind of knowledge is intuitive, the second logical. But intuition and images are incomplete and imperfect as long as they are only sensation or impression; expression is essential to their being. Such expression is language in the largest sense, which includes all possible media, beside words. Aesthetics is thus the universal science of language, it is general linguistic. Art is the expression of intuitions, as is science also. Beauty is "successful expression, or rather expression pure and simple and nothing more, for expression which is not successful is not expression at all." Thus expression is so logically inclusive a term that it is hardly more than an equivalent for transitive being or active existence. By the boldest of simple formulas, elaborated by a systematic application of the principle of identification as equivalence, Croce has provided the world of aesthetic theory with perhaps its chief novelty in recent years. But it is not his logic or learning that have won him this place. It is due, as Craven writes, to his moral influence;

"out of the crushing materialism of modern life Benedetto Croce has come to be the leader of an idealism which has slowly spread from Italian soil to practically every country of the globe."

The idealism in a moral sense which makes Croce so influential is not the only type of idealism present in him, for it is to be found very extensively in its more technical sense in the history of philosophy. Beauty, to begin with, is for him not a quality but the result of a spiritual activity, whose *esse* is *percipi,* and communication is not essential to it, in his view. Expression, on the contrary, is essential, and it may even be termed self-expression, a verbal form which furnishes a sympathetic emotional formula for others beside expressionists. Art and the experience of beauty is a form of knowledge, a knowledge of the individual, which is theoretic rather than practical. What really is expressed in expression, according to Croce, is the desire or volition of the expresser, or will in general, a principle derived from Schelling and Schopenhauer. Thus idealism as a broad position in philosophy comes to the fore, since he identifies the intuition of the individual with expression in general, and the expression of the individual with intuition in general. The idealistic position, at least in Croce, involves so profound a dualism that a consistent aesthetics becomes impossible. The witness of memory and the belief in other men's minds, implied in communication, are stubborn obstacles to idealism, and nowhere more than in Croce's theory of art. In addition to the difficulties raised by attempting to harmonize intuition and expression with memory and communication, if will is posited as the underlying reality expressed, we are confronted by the fact that there are other wills than our own, which are not merely obstacles to or the recipients of our voluntary activity. Strangest of all, there are then some acts of will which are not those of man, for the clouds have as just a warrant to existence as symphonies, and some men are killed by lightning.

The abuse of the principle of identification by Croce is emphasized by Papini in his brilliant book, *Four and Twenty Minds:* "If you disregard critical trivialities and didactic accessories, the entire aesthetic system of Croce amounts merely to a hunt for pseudonyms of the word 'art,' and may indeed be stated briefly and accurately in this formula: art-intuition-expression-feeling-imagination-fancy-lyricism-beauty. And you must be careful not to take these words with the shadings and distinctions which they have in ordinary or scientific language. Not a bit of it. Every word is merely a different set of syllables signifying absolutely and completely the same thing." In the *Foundations of Aesthetics,* it is observed of Croce's elaborate discussion: "In fact the conclusion of the whole matter is the same as the beginning. Something happens which has been called Art, and which we too rightly call art. This *is* Art. As there is no reason to doubt his sincerity and as his literary, dramatic and historical writings are of such undoubted value, the most charitable explanation of this equivocation would be that Croce, pre-occupied with the metaphysics of creative idealism, is endeavouring to say in speculative language something exceptionally obvious—for which he has attempted to create a personal vocabulary by exploiting the suggestive powers of accepted phrases."

As the prime defect of empathy is its arbitrary exclusiveness and that of expression is its vast inclusiveness, art objects easily demonstrate these fundamental shortcomings.

Empathy and Expression Tested by Art Objects

Vernon Lee and Anstruther-Thomson in various experiments proved to their satisfaction the distinctive function of empathy as distinguishing the aesthetic experience. Any Greek statue will do, and the remarks of Berenson quoted above can be applied to it. It will be found, however, that we cannot discover any experiences from which, as human beings with the muscular and nervous constitution that we possess, muscular activity and an active will are absent. We empathize whenever we are conscious, so that this word describes something which, in the first place does not do any more than condense a paradox, and in the second, so far as it is true, is not restricted to perceptions of beauty and ugliness.

Expression, on the other hand, is so broad a term in popular usage that it also applies to all concepts and sensations, and in its artificially protected use by Croce amounts to no more than a set of verbal equivalents, yet it fails to account for the quality of specific works of art. It does not even possess the plausibility of an aspect of consciousness, an asset which empathy can rely upon, and by confining itself to exploring the concept of art and of beauty remains at the last still within a closed circle, remote from the moving stimulus of an actually beautiful work of art, felt to be such. The *Venus of Milo* may be considered beautiful, and any one of the startling new buildings erected in New York in the last ten years may also be felt to possess a newer beauty. Yet if intuition and expression explain it all, expression fails to tell us why or how time in its historical unfolding can and does intuit and express differently.

The danger of Croce's system is well illustrated by a popular variety of newspaper puzzle, in which words are arranged on a ladder or in a series of panels. An example which will illustrate Croce's logic is this: to change the word man into the word dog in a series of three other words, changing only one letter at a time and making a real word each time. The answer is: man—can—dan—don—dog. According to Croce's logic this might prove that man is a dog and that man and dog are basically the same thing. In each transition the formal elements of partial identification predominate over the formal contradictions. Furthermore, a metaphysics of the Crocean type can be constructed by carrying the process a little further. A completely rounded, symmetrical, and all-inclusive system can be proved by continuing the series until it returns to man, its starting point, without involving any words already used. After working out this series: man—can—dan—don—dog, we can keep on, adding these words: dig—din—fin—fan, and so return to man.

Of course, there is the profound suspicion that any rounded system of thought, shock-proof because logical, may have no more real validity than the sequence of words from man to dog and back again, and it is at the same time true that any other type of world-view will be exposed to serious question, lacking formal consistency. In default of such consistency, it is probable that a system of thought will rely on a convincing analogy, probably a physical object, and be so limited by its subordination to that analogy that those whose sympathies are not stirred by the analogy will readily detect its failure to survive the tests of formal logic. We are indeed compelled to choose between the aesthetic quality of architectural logical constructions and the persuasive capacity of a familiar aesthetic analogy drawn from some other object of experience. The central problem, therefore, is the justification of analogy. Does the art object establish a genuine analogy between it and reality? Is art true communication?

CHAPTER XI

IS ART TRUE COMMUNICATION?

Coleridge said: "The artist must imitate that which is within the thing, that which is active through form and figure, and discourses to us by symbols." He viewed beauty as "the subjection of matter to spirit so as to be transformed into a symbol, in and through which the spirit reveals itself." Thus it may be held that objects of art are effective and more or less adequate symbols of reality, and that the principal meaning of art is that it does communicate reality to us.

Since such views are usually termed mystical, and this term covers a wide range of ideas, it is necessary, first of all, to point out what mysticism is not. To begin with, what is mystical is not merely the mysterious. The sound of footsteps shuffling through a house at midnight may seem mysterious, but my expectation that the sun will rise again tomorrow, or my belief that I am the same person in this body that was in it yesterday, before I fell asleep last night, is not so much mysterious as mystical.

From one point of view, what is mystical is unquestioned intuition objectified into abstractions which may in that way be classified and dealt with. In vulgar usage, mysticism, however, includes so many things, from hypnotism, the table-rapping of spiritualistic mediums, and conjurers' tricks all the way to the individual's conviction of his own existence, that it is deceptively easy to appeal to it immediately. But thought and action are both too easily emptied of any significance if it is at once said that because eventual truth or reality is mystical, all its fractions and facets are so also. It is a maxim of intellectual health that the mystical principle should be appealed to after the other meanings of thought and sensation have been developed as far as possible. However, since any system of thought or ordered set of conclusions on general problems necessarily involves mystical elements, the matter must sooner or later be examined. These elements can be concealed, with deliberate or, more often, unrealized equivocations; they can be appealed to at once, with prompt loss of significance; or they can be acknowledged in their proper place.

Indeed, it is not so surprising that the concept and our experience, in its irregular oncoming flow, should sometimes fail to resemble each other, as that ideas and things should even occasionally somehow correspond. That our knowledge is imperfect and often erroneous can be accounted for and it has attracted the attention of thinkers since civilization began, but that our knowledge should ever and in any given case be truthful knowledge is logically a mystical situation. That there should be sin, error, injustice in our world is far less difficult to make sure of, than that the sick should ever be cured, judges should ever issue true opinions, and that what is good should ever prosper. It may likewise be held extraordinary that men should be able to make things which we call objects of fine art, and that sometimes such things should be beautiful.

This attitude may, of course, be denied the name of mysticism, because it is so far from the popular understanding of the term. The elements of the character described above may also be so effectively concealed by being worked into presumptions implied but not stated, that systems like Kant's transcendentalism, Croce's intuitionalism, and Hegel's logic appear to consist entirely of their obvious superstructure. Those elements, however, remain, and in art they can not be so convincingly dissembled as elsewhere.

The claims of mysticism, as itself a system or attitude of thought, have attracted certain thinkers. The experience gained in and through art impresses many who have had such experience as being direct knowledge of various kinds of truth. To them art reveals what is real in truth, the spirit of nature, the ideal, the typical, or the universal.

A sudden deepening of the significance of a maxim or formula is cited by James as the simplest rudiment of the mystical state. But it may be taken as the distinguishing characteristic of the experience derived from objects of art. What was before merely a sequence of pleasant sounds, an interesting arrangement of spots of color on a surface, or a satisfying equilibrium worked out in a mass of marble, acquires a significance either suddenly, without previous acquaintance, or suddenly, after accumulated familiarity and repeated efforts to understand. The momentarily complete correspondence between the object and the goal of desire is a kind of knowledge, and this knowledge is felt to be true, within the limits of the period of contemplation.

The association, often remarked, between art, religion, and love, is not accidental, but historical as well as philosophical. Whether sculpture or painting was the earlier art, and whether they developed independently or as subordinate to architecture, their intimate connection with the practice of religion is unquestionable and it is significant. With the rise of individualism and the application of Platonism to the phenomena of love, there developed the theories of courtly and romantic love, so that today for many people poetry means almost exclusively the lyric devoted to love.

The Distinguishing Traits of Mysticism

Although the distinguishing traits of mysticism are variously described, those selected by James are of interest in relation to art. The marks are: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity. They all reduce to the proposition that so-called secondary qualities, the good, the true, and the beautiful, are directly perceived; they are primary characteristics of reality.

The mystical experience is ineffable and defies expression, so that, especially for the religious mystic, others are apt to find what he reports, the elements of his description, self-contradictory or absurd. As we have seen in the second chapter, however, the ineffability of the aesthetic experience is now stressed by most of those who assail art criticism, and it is a standard doctrine among creative artists, most of whom are incapable of expressing themselves otherwise than through their particular media. So far as ineffability means that words cannot be substituted for objects in effective relations, it is an obvious truism. But that, however temporarily and precariously, we do anticipate, communicate, and record our experience, is equally obvious. The claim that art is exclusively or even especially ineffable in the strict sense is hard to maintain. Words and thoughts are not identical by definition, nor are thoughts expressible only in verbal and written language, for the other arts also express. On the other hand, that we can never get quite the same result from a poem as from a symphony is just as true as that we cannot substitute a label for a statue or a painting. Objects of art cannot be substituted for one another, as each offers a distinct range of expression, nor can language found in prose statements of fact be used in their place, so that there is in the aesthetic experience of art objects, felt to be such, a special sense of conviction, a realization of their unique character, which keenly impresses those who have beheld beauty in art.

The noetic quality, which James discussed with particular reference to religious experience, is also to be found in the enjoyment of art. For the art-lover there is no doubt that he has if only for the moment, grasped certainty. What laboratory experiment is for the physical scientist in affording individual conviction of abstract law, the art object is in supplying positive and complete awareness of a pure, abstract quality in a concrete object external to the lover of beauty. While this knowledge cannot be conveyed in alien terms which will infallibly and unfailingly yield exactly the same result to anybody, it can be remembered with a definite sense of authority. The experiments in the laboratory can be repeated and will always yield the same result, and this is supposed to confer a superior certitude on physical science. But the parallel between the scientific experiment and the aesthetic act is not just if used to that end. The experiment in the laboratory will yield the expected result under proper and easily controlled conditions, for a man trained in its technique and urged by a desire to handle the apparatus or verify abstract truth. The probability that a man with adequate training, following a fairly well understood train of activities, can, when urged by a desire to manipulate materials or to enjoy abstract beauty, create an object which will, at least for the maker and his fellow artists, be beautiful, is practically as certain. On the other hand, scientific truth thus discovered or verified possesses no guaranty that it will from that moment forward be universally accepted by men regardless of their native and acquired capacity to appreciate such truth. Nor is there any certainty that an object created under the conditions named will be hailed as a masterpiece of art. The number of physical experiments which result in novel scientific truth is probably even smaller than the number of efforts to create beautiful objects of art which are relatively successful. It is the dissatisfaction with what has been done, an activity spurred by scepticism or curiosity, that leads to beneficial change in physical science as well as in art.

The third characteristic of the mystical experience, according to James, is its transiency. He notes that except in rare instances it does not seem to last much beyond half an hour, and sometimes it can be recalled with difficulty, although it can be recognized when it recurs. But the history of most art-lovers also is that the moments of very intense, positive satisfaction, in which the distinction between subject and object fades away and the passage of time is ignored, so that time seems to stand still and qualities take on the permanence of a tangible object, are extremely short. They live in the recollection and anticipation of such moments.

The fourth mark which James notes is the passivity of the mystic which makes him feel that his own will is in abeyance, that he is in the power of something greater and stronger than he. Such a state is also found in prophetic speech and mediumistic trance. At any rate this is but a franker way of saying the same thing that is stated by Santayana of beauty, that it is a pleasure which we attribute to the object instead of to ourselves, or by Vernon Lee when she said that beauty is something which we feel into the object and that it is exclusively a result of our own activities. Their reasoning tries to explain the passive attitude of the art-lover by denying that qualities have any existence outside the individual experiencing them and asserting that the aesthetic experience is a special type of illusion. A somewhat different and better way of saying the same thing is to declare that beauty becomes known through contemplation. Yet it is the factor of passivity which, taken together with its intrinsic element of pleasure, gives currency to the popular view according to which beauty is passive enjoyment, and each of us knows what he likes, although he doesn't know much about art.

States deceptively like the mystical experience can, artificially, be secured through alcohol, narcotics, and various drugs. The psychological results are strikingly similar, but we are readily aware of the difference and the experience is as false as the means are artificial. The cost to the physical constitution is too great. The intellectual and spiritual aspects found in the aesthetic experience of works of art are quite absent. It is possible that the secondary aesthetic satisfactions received from contemplation of the landscape may also be lacking in those aspects, but such delight is, as we have already seen, dependent on the primary insight embodied in works of art. There is always a dignity and importance in the work of art, for us as human beings, since the work of art is also a human product, that is not to be found in the landscape or in the temporary madness induced by drugs.

There is, then, a truth experienced in art in contrast with the intoxication of alcohol, for art's truth is recalled with satisfaction. Matthew Arnold said that men who had close acquaintance with the arts, were "like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience: more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live." Plato was impressed with the directness and immediacy of poetic inspiration and termed it divine, he employed the poetic and dramatic form of the dialogue to narrate his philosophical quest, and he used his imaginative myths, not as coarsely disguised abstractions, but that through and in them, themselves works of art, to the imagination of the reader might also be communicated the insight into truth which was his.

Relevancy of Mystical Truth

"Mystical truth," says James, "exists for the individual who has the transport, but for no one else. In this, as I have said, it resembles the knowledge given us in sensations more than that given by conceptual thought. Thought, with its remoteness and abstractness, has often enough in the history of philosophy been contrasted unfavorably with sensation. It is a commonplace of metaphysics that God's knowledge cannot be discursive but must be intuitive, that is, must be constructed more after the pattern of what in ourselves is called immediate feeling, than after that of proposition and judgment." Now the work of art possesses the advantages of both sensation and discursive thought, for it must not only be an object of sensation, and also exert a positive sensuous appeal, but at the same time it is not an instantaneous act of the physical world, like a streak of lightning, nor something which assumes its given shape unaided, like a mountain peak. It is a human product, the result of practiced skill, calculation, estimation of effect, critical reflection and judgment on the part of the artist. It is valued and preserved, if it is successful, after the artist has ceased to be, because it retains its potential capacity to stimulate the senses agreeably, to satisfy the demand for rational, intellectual quality, at the moment both are fused in a conviction of mystical truth.

The ability so to perceive the universal or typically significant in the innumerable variety and apparent confusion of experience is not merely an ability to find an average or median representative of the class to which it belongs, but to penetrate to the permanent reality in the objects of sense. Aristotle said that art beside imitating appearance should preserve the type and at the same time ennoble it; and this quality of nobility must depend on the ability of the imitation to convey or communicate perhaps more clearly and intensely than casual or familiar inspection can do, something of essential truth. In this, as is so rarely realized, he did no more than develop the suggestions of Plato, for his theory of art simply corrects Plato's defects, due to an unfortunate application of the doctrine of ideas. The neoclassic theorists, such as Rymer, were far afield when they understood Aristotle to mean the conventional type, or orthodox representative. The romanticists by recurring to the mystical source in Plotinus were able to make art vastly more significant than a clever accomplishment or a moral allegory.

Arguments against Mysticism

An opponent of mysticism asserts that at the bottom of the mystic imagination there is a tendency to incarnate the ideal in the tangible, to discover a hidden idea behind all phenomena or material events, to suppose that there is in things a supernatural principle which is revealed to anybody who knows how to penetrate to it. But although this may be the philosophy of magic as well, magic is a false program because it assumes that verbal forms and symbolic acts by their mere statement or exercise bring about effective changes in things. Nor need the power felt in an art object during an aesthetic experience be considered supernatural; it may be rare and surprisingly actual without being an evidence of superstitious belief. But the method of proceeding through symbols and analogies, characteristic of the mystical imagination, is not a fault, except when the range of the symbol's potency is misunderstood or the implications of the analogy are unwarrantably extended. The fact is, that human thought and rational or moral conduct are impossible without symbols. Analogy is so important a means to human existence that Buchanan recently remarked: "Any history of thought might begin and end with the statement that man is an analogical animal."

To be sure, many religious mystics feel that all appearances are vain, unless they are symbols of spiritual reality, and since life can become so exciting and possess such vast vistas of appearances whose symbolic import is to be felt rather than intelligibly determined, little interest remains for that mystic in the ordinary processes of induction and deduction. A collection of symbolic references thus discovered in the ebb and flow of experienced appearances may indeed become an artificial construction when it is substituted for the whole richer and eventually more interesting world of reality. But in the world of art, whose objects are different in kind from the spontaneous products of nature, the symbolic references are kept within bounds, and there is little likelihood that the love of art as a whole will unfit a man to cope with the working world. To be sure there is some danger of this kind in literature and music, but the perils here can be easily overcome by contact with architecture, painting, and sculpture, where the possibilities of effective delusion are diminished.

A familiar argument by which the mystical conviction of adequate symbolism is to be swept away, is through the device of attributing the realization of import in works of art to "unrecalled events in past experience." The logic of this course is one that is often properly charged as an error against mystics of a pantheistic type, for whom the opposite of an idea is really part of that idea because it is only so far as it is an opposite and therefore belongs to or is subsumed under the idea. Such a device can prove the theory of association in psychology as well as any variety of monism whatever. This does not mean, however, that past experience may not be summarized in the moment of insight afforded by the aesthetic experience; it only signifies that the meaning of the aesthetic experience, with its correlative emotion, does not consist merely of the combination of past experiences which well up into consciousness without our being able to recall the specific occasions on which they took place. Given a few ideas, we can surmise how others could be gained, but it has not yet been satisfactorily explained how any quantity of physical contacts can become a single idea.

The position that whatever is, is right, because to be in itself must be right, is a familiar one also, among certain sorts of mystics. In art, beauty is gained through contemplation of the object, but intrinsic warrant, that all human actions are good and all thoughts true, because they exist, cannot justly be extended to morals or to science. The beautiful human being or the happy spirit is not thereby endowed with infallible judgment or incapacity to sin. Feeling may determine value for the individual in art, but not in ethics or physics. This phase of the mystical conviction, that feeling determines value, may then properly be restricted to the field of aesthetics. Nevertheless, the problem of the nature, scope, and validity of intuition is a central one in mysticism and in art.

Similarity of conviction and certitude which exists in the aesthetic experience and in religious fervor has often been pointed out. But the unexpected overpowering of the intellect and the emotions by a feeling of awe, as in the presence of something sublime, a union of knowledge and belief, is not confined exclusively to the fields of religion or art. The objectification of such a feeling, both on the part of the creative artist and the enjoying observer, is a saving factor in the work of art, because it provides opportunities for comparison, comparison of the potency and character of different works of art, as well as of the special experience thus had with other more customary types. Here we find a stabilizing and wholesome aspect of art, freeing it from the suspicion of mere illusion, hypnotic trance, or the abnormal excitement sometimes associated with mystic impulses not so expressed or productive.

Mysticism and Imagination

With regard to the metaphysical products of the mystic imagination, Ribot asserts that history shows philosophy has done little else than take ideas or principles mystic in their origin and substitute the forms of a rational system of coherent concepts for the forms of images and undemonstrable affirmations.

The concept of the imagination itself is one that comes to the fore mainly in the romantic and subsequent eras. To explain the presence of intuitions, concretely presented as images in the mind, an instinct, function, or mechanism is postulated, to which is given the name imagination. That images apparently depending on something external to the mind exist, is acknowledged to be a fact, but somehow, it is felt, the difficulties of the situation are banished by transferring the weight of significance, or greater measure of reality, to the postulated function of the mind rather than to the existences for which that function is made to account.

As may easily be observed, the analogy on which classical or formal logic itself is based is that of classical architecture, and the criteria of that logic are modelled closely on the conventional elements of formal beauty found in that architecture. This art is, first of all, one in which the tangible and ponderable materials are combined in durable and permanent relations satisfying basic demands for equilibrium, symmetry, proportion, consistency, and the other qualities of classical buildings. Because tangible, ponderable matter occurs in detached particles or in masses which are capable of being broken up into particles, through observing the structural principles noted, a unity in separate edifices can be secured which the mind assumes to be ultimately significant of matter as a whole. In such artificial products a microcosm is produced which is an adequate symbol of matter too extensive or too mobile to be so controlled and formalized by human effort.

On the other hand, the vast majority of images are visual in origin, the range of security and activity afforded the bodily organism by vision, in the tangible world, is much greater than that afforded by touch itself. It may well be questioned whether the whole theory of images and of the imagination is not so closely conditioned by the fact of its visual origin and analogy that it cannot properly be extended to include so-called tactile, kinesthetic, and other images. In any case, it is the unresolved conflict between visual images, the most frequent furniture of the mind, and the deep-seated demand for architectural stability embodied in the canons of formal logic, which may be considered the principal difficulty in the mystic imagination. Mysticism generally prefers to entrust itself to the reality of images, rather than depend on the relatively limited reality given it by formal logic. Innumerable attempts have been made to devise systems of logic which would enable us to surmount the obstacles presented by classical, formal logic to a life necessarily one of action. It is discovered that unfortunately such a logic is powerless to do much more than forecast failure, defeat, and negation, remaining impotent to create genuine novelty. Nor can classical logic provide concrete instructions for specific cases instead of general rules describing the broad character of final results, when a course of action has achieved its goal and is at rest, like the Parthenon.

Yet the Parthenon once was not, and even after it has been achieved, men have not been satisfied with merely repeating the pattern of that structure. As the social constitution of each age has slowly or quickly altered, new styles even in architecture have been demanded and realized. The mystical creative imagination of the artist, as architect, has not always accurately reproduced in the mind pictures of existing structures which he has seen, but deliberately or, more probably, hardly realizing the fact, the images which rise up in his mind have novel elements which afford to the pre-visioned structure a deeper and more intense satisfaction than images as accurate as those reflected in a mirror could ever do. And the amazing fact is that while classical architecture exploits logical coherence, symmetry, and other qualities, and goes so far as to identify them with the laws of physics, Gothic architecture succeeds in transcending the laws of classical architecture and logic, while still retaining the support of the laws of physics.

Reliance on the validity of analogy, which underlies the theories of proportion fundamental in arithmetic, is but a special instance of the fact that we can, must, and do accept and employ concepts and processes which are undemonstrable through appeal to our formal logic based on the example of classical architecture. The basic importance of the principle of analogy is being more fully realized by logicians and speculative thinkers today, and its ultimately irrational character, in the ordinary sense of reason as a common fund of classically logical rules, is being more widely recognized. In contrast to the illusions of religious mystics, and the dreamy states induced by an emotional attachment to landscape, such a reasonable evaluation of analogy may be denied the title of mysticism, yet the undemonstrable but valid character of analogy, as the eventual justification of both thought and action, applies to mental images and to those of art as well.

This may lead to a modernized version of the Aristotelian theory of imitation, a theory which sought to account for the relation between the reality present in the work of art and other sorts of reality, by elevating a familiar word into a philosophical principle. Essentially it asserts that the relation between art works and reality is not accidental or merely deceptive, but genuinely valid and relevant to the nature of both. The successful art work does not merely substitute one object for another, it does not give us simply a copy of external appearance, but it states a true analogy, a significant relation between a concrete existence and a universal essence, between the statue of *Hermes* and beauty.

Croce on Intuition

There is a good deal of justice in the view that Croce's statements with regard to the nature of intuition are true insofar as they may also be asserted of the mystic relation set up in the aesthetic experience. But first it may be observed that except in the popular theory of genius, intuition does not mean exclusively a complete appreciation springing suddenly from nowhere. Only those who have never created anything in which they found permanent or repeated aesthetic satisfaction, or who have never progressed beyond a few unreflecting aesthetic experiences associated with their early childhood, can fancy that such an experience or relation consists in a spasmodic expression under the stress of violent emotion, without sufficient antecedents or adequate consequences in the individual.

Croce himself acknowledges the legitimacy of the view favored above and in the chapter on imitation, with regard to a proper interpretation of Aristotle's term *imitation*. He says of it: "Now truth has been maintained, or at least shadowed with these words, now error. More frequently, nothing definite has been thought. One of the legitimate meanings occurs when imitation is understood as representation or intuition of nature, a form of knowledge. And when this meaning has been understood, by placing in greater relief the spiritual character of the process, the other proposition becomes also legitimate; namely that art is the idealisation or idealising imitation of nature."

Croce, as has already been noted, draws, however, a distinction between intuitive knowledge and logical knowledge, gained respectively through the imagination and the intellect, and resulting, correspondingly, in knowledge of individuals and universals, of single things and their relations, concretely presented as images and concepts. Considering knowledge as knowing, nevertheless, both kinds are intrinsically intuitive, for they rely eventually on the validity of analogy, and to him who has knowledge, while he is actively knowing, both images and concepts demand and secure belief, for they are equally convincing. Croce himself shows that there is a continuous appeal to intuition throughout life, so that it seems to be rather a question of what intuitive knowledge remains consistently intuitive without capability of transformation into the other sort, while some knowledge can be so transformed. Investigation discloses, however, that there is no such radical separation between the two types; the multiplication table itself cannot be used without some emotional tone attached to it, and as a genuine conquest of truth within its own sphere, it may be contemplated with positive satisfaction repeatedly.

Croce's discussion of intuition is extremely important and its importance can be brought out by noting how its defects are mainly due to the unjustified values and relations which he establishes between it and expression. He stresses the hostility between the recognized science of logic and the lack of such a science of the intuitive. But there is a science of the intuitive; it is art history and criticism. He repeats the familiar saying that intuition is blind, that intellect must guide. But it is intuition which particularly relies on seeing, the images which it specifically depends upon are mainly visual images, while intellect, here limited to the employment of the syllogism, depends on the criteria afforded by classical architecture. Croce maintains that intuition is independent of the intellect, but we should observe that the intellect is not independent of intuition. He asserts that a distinction between the real and the unreal is not the primary characteristic of intuition; that intuition is an undiscriminating unity, a perception both of the real and of the simple image of what is possible; that intuition objectifies impressions, whatever they may be, without reference to external reality. But so far as such observations are true, external reality must be understood as tangible extension in space, which can be understood and controlled through the norms of classic architecture, whereas this principle is itself dependent on the mysticism of analogy, and what is impossible is impossible only insofar as it violates those norms. Any conceivable image can be seen at least in painting.

Croce discusses the relation between intuition and sensation in able terms. Sensation is often confused with intuition, he says, but sensation, he asserts, is the unformed matter which the spirit cannot absorb into itself; in the abstract, it is mechanism, or passivity, what the human spirit experiences but does not produce. Yet, he continues, matter is changeable, for otherwise the human spirit could never be a real activity. This, however, is in him but a consequence of his radical dualism, which drives him to the fundamental inconsistencies brought to light earlier in analyzing his concept of expression. The English philosophers emphasized in convincing ways the fact that sensation and perception are both equally near or remote from the human being while he feels, thinks, and acts. This, of course, led some to prefer a purely spiritualistic explanation of the universe, while others chose to stake everything on the consistency and coherence of tangible matter, although both schools erred in making such an exclusive choice. The *Hermes* of Praxiteles refutes the contentions of both.

Croce's remarks on the weakness of the theory of association, as a sufficient solution of the difficulties confronting nineteenth-century psychology, are very persuasive. "Intuition," he says, "is sometimes confused with crude sensation. But because this confusion wounds ordinary good sense, an attempt has often been made to attenuate it or cleanse it, thanks to a phraseology which apparently desires to confuse and distinguish at the same time. Thus it has been asserted that intuition is sensation, but not simple sensation so much as the association of sensations, and here the mistake arises precisely in that word 'association.' It is understood either as memory, mnemonic association, conscious recollection; and in such case the pretension to bring together in memory elements which are not intuited, distinct, possessed somehow by the spirit and products of consciousness, seems inconceivable; or it is understood as the association of unconscious elements; and, in this second case, one does not get away from sensation and naturalism. If later, as some associationists do, one speaks of an association which is not memory, nor flux of sensations, but a productive association (formative, constructive, distinguishing), in such case one concedes the thing and denies only the word. In fact, productive association is no longer association in the sense of the sensualists, but synthesis, that is, spiritual activity. Synthesis is also called association; but with the concept of productivity is established the distinction between passivity and activity, between sensation and intuition."

When, however, Croce goes on to say that the test of a true intuition is expression, that whatever is not expressed is still sensation, his own inclination to prefer pure spiritualism is disclosed. When, further, he asks: "How can we have a real intuition of a geometrical figure unless we have it so clear in imagination that we can immediately trace it?" he is limiting his own view by an *a posteriori* image, which sacrifices more to syllogistic consistency than is gained for understanding and insight. But in any case, his confident use of intuition, his belief in a direct and unqualified perception of truth, is characteristically mystical.

Conclusions on the Validity of Mysticism Reached by James

A conviction of the ultimate validity of analogy is abundantly displayed in the mystical foundation of Plato's speculative activity. Prostituted by some of his late successors, the principle could degenerate into a philosophy of magic and diabolism. But William James, at the end of a study of extreme cases of abnormal religious phenomena, could arrive at significant conclusions regarding the warrant for truth which that form of mysticism, so frequently absurd if not repulsive, could furnish. He divides his answer into three parts:

"1. Mystical states, when well developed, usually are, and have the right to be, absolutely authoritative over the individuals to whom they come.

"2. No authority emanates from them which should make it a duty for those who stand outside of them to accept their revelations uncritically.

"3. They break down the authority of the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness, based upon the understanding and the senses alone. They show it to be only one kind of consciousness. They open out the possibility of other orders of truth, in which, so far as anything in us vitally responds to them, we may freely continue to have faith."

These conclusions, however, seem to the religious mystic himself timid and disappointing. To the reader with other interests who finally reaches them after following James through more than four hundred pages of *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* they also seem in most cases either a confession of failure to solve the problems to which the book is devoted, or merely an affirmative statement of the questions to which it should provide answers. But when those conclusions are properly applied to contemplation, are concretely true of beauty most fully realized in and through works of art, they no longer suffer from the accusations of failure and disappointment. The aesthetic experience has complete authority over the person to whom it comes. Such an experience does not impose a moral obligation upon others to accept it, but art history and the succession of styles demonstrate that, as a matter of fact, beauty or the positive satisfaction of contemplation is not realized by the individual in complete isolation or solitude. It is true for him who experiences it, but it is also true for a good many others at that same period of time and afterwards; it is capable of being recorded and communicated. Without the inherent dangers to social well-being and individual health found in religious hysteria, art does diminish the claims of sensation or perception as alone deserving authoritative recognition. The greatest obstacle to the proper judgment of value in sensations, and to the proper employment of concepts, comes from a dominating intrusion of contemplation, with its mystic justification in analogy, into the spheres of engineering and morals, where it does not apply, instead of in the spheres of science and ethics, where it does apply to the degree that those fields afford satisfaction to contemplation, or the field of beauty and art, where it is exclusively and completely relevant.

A proper direction of contemplation secures moral benefits which are partially realized in contemporary life. It provides a compensation for sheer regimentation and the pressure of numbers and an eventual antidote to their evils. It affords a refuge from the brutal necessities of pedagogy in art as well as other subjects taught in schools. The emergence of new styles, as well as of individual preeminence in creative art, may soundly be considered genuine efforts to regain anew the authority, conviction, and freedom of the mystical relation. It is, furthermore, a corrective of exclusive and brittle intellectualism which can perceive nothing but the achievement of abstract concepts, functioning in obedience to a mechanistic determinism, in the work of art.

By practical men striving in human society, whether like our own industrial, competitive, and capitalistic, or any other historic pattern, the artist is despised as not primarily concerned with gaining power over his fellow men. Calculation to satisfy sensation is the highest achievement of their lives rationalized in a philosophy, by practical philistines. That a man should pursue anything for its own sake, devote himself as far as he is able, exclusively to beauty, seems to such philosophers the clearest sign of folly. Yet they do perceive aesthetic value on very low levels; their mystical intuitions are often strong but restricted to crude or coarse objects, the intensity of their appreciation is usually in inverse proportion to the genuine significance of what they aesthetically appreciate. They worship time-worn proverbs as authoritative revelations of ethical insight, they cling to obsolete political and economic institutions long after they have lost their capacity to serve human need, and they admire academic art, that is, the art which is at once popular, authoritatively official, and in the static style of a recently established tradition.

New movements in art always disclose the self-renewing demand of human beings to conquer for themselves a positive satisfaction for contemplation which shall be wholly theirs, a mystical conviction of insight into the truth, as what ought to be. Modern literature and modern painting in every age repeat the rebellion of each new generation against the static, formalized conventions which were once, for the fathers of the new generation, living forms but have now lost that precious mystical value. A popular explanation of this cycle by Freudianism, as we have already noted, is but a mythological combination of medical terminology with Schopenhauer's guiding concepts, and it is losing ground, it is no longer either a shocking or an emancipating theory, it is merely dull.

Youth Naturally Mystical

A few years ago, Stuart P. Sherman wrote with great force on the transfer of mystic conviction and activity by the younger generation from the fields of politics and economics to that of art. His remarks apply to issues broader than that of Puritanism versus Freudianism with which he was primarily concerned. He said:

"Now, as I talk with the members of the beautiful younger generation which comes through my classroom year after year, I find that the Freudians are profoundly mistaken in their analysis of human nature. The deepest craving of these average young men and women is not to be unbound, and released, and to be given a license for a free and spontaneous doing as they please in all directions. They recognize that nature and environment and lax educational discipline have made them beings of sufficiently uncoördinated desires and scattering activities.

"What they deeply crave is a binding generalization of philosophy, or religion, or morals, which will give direction and purpose, which will give channel and speed, to the languid diffusive drift of their lives. The suppressed desire which causes their unhappiness is a suppressed desire for a good life, for the perfection of their human possibilities. The average unreflective man does not always know that this is, in fact, his malady. And in the blind hunger and thirst of his unenlightened nature, he reaches out eagerly for opiates and anodynes, which leave him unsatisfied. But what the innermost law of his being demands, what his human nature craves, is something good and great that he can do with his heart and mind and body. He craves the active peace of surrender and devotion to something greater than himself. Surrender to anything less means the degradation and humiliation of his spirit."

The situation so aptly described by Sherman is re-created with each new generation, it is the effective impulse which leads to any real benefit that students derive from academic education, and if it is merely a biological phenomenon, or a perpetually revived illusion, then youth is mere madness and the only thing real is the grave.

The usual answer to the question, what is the test to be employed in the judgment of art, is intensity. However, if intensity is also understood to mean the force, energy, or strength of sensation, this test as ordinarily applied may rest entirely on an emotional basis, it may confirm the view that the meaning of art is pleasurable emotion, and it may rely upon a philosophy broadly sensualistic. The chief but distinguishing difference seems to be that in the experience of beauty in and through works of art, the source of the emotional state comes from without, but a relation between the one who experiences beauty and beauty itself is of a different order from the wholly sensual pleasures, and is felt to be such. It is felt to be reasonable, to point toward something greater and larger than the sensible qualities of the object present to the senses; it is a state of knowledge, a happiness derived from a genuine, though temporary, union with reality.

The advantage of the test of intensity is that it is one which can be applied both by the creating artist and the responding art-lover. It is true that the art-lover can, through imagination, share in the creative activity of the artist, but the artist also shares in the contemplative activity of the art-lover, when he is in the presence of his own production. Yet both realize the aesthetic experience as characterized by its intensity. It differs from the intensity of sensation by being a state of knowledge, it is different from memory or anticipation by establishing a true relation from the one who has an aesthetic experience through the present art object to an essence not wholly limited to that object.

The relation of rhythm in art to intensity has often been remarked. It is to be observed in music, the drama, sculpture, painting, and other types. In literature, particularly verse, and in music, it is perhaps most conspicuous, but it is present effectively in all. It has a great power of stimulation, it quickens the consciousness of vitality. It is, indeed, so important a factor in achieving intensity, that some thinkers have attempted to explain the whole meaning of art through the word rhythm. This is doubtless too restricted an explanation, for intensity needs to be seen in its proper relation to what is experienced in the aesthetic state. But it is, however, those culminating crests of the rising tides of rhythm in drama and in poetry which provide us with illuminating forms of words, and memorable phrases, crystallizing whole ranges of thought, emotion, and sensation in brilliant transparent jewels. Many words, after all, are but worn-out metaphors, which once proved so acceptable because of the intensity of their meanings that they were integrated into the language and have now finally lost that intensity. The stupidity and ridiculousness of love letters read in court rooms is not due to the insincerity of the writers, for their sincerity is often only too painfully apparent, but for those whose aesthetic satisfactions have been limited to trite images and the most familiar metaphors, even moments of great emotional excitement fail to afford others the genuine vision, the integrity of insight that characterizes true works of art.

Neilson on Intensity

Neilson has pointed out how the factor of intensity is common to all the three main schools of art; the romanticists, the classicists, and the naturalists. Phrases generally equivalent to intensity which have been used by critics belonging to those schools are; gusto, temperament, inspiration, truth to nature, and so on. Matthew Arnold goes to Homer, Shakespeare, Dante and Milton for examples of what he calls high seriousness, adapting a phrase from Aristotle. Specifically what Arnold cites are examples not of seriousness but of intensity. However, he retained verbal consistency by excluding Chaucer from the class of those in whom intensity, as synonymous with high seriousness, is found. In his definition of poetry, Arnold begged the question by avoiding the word imagination and including the word poetic in his explanation of what poetry is. Arnold himself, although he placed Gray in the company of the great masters of high seriousness, admitted the lack of vital, moving imagination, that is, of intensity in him, with the famous assertion that "he never spoke out."

Intensity alone, however, for the reasons pointed out above, is not by itself an all-inclusive, self-sufficient determination of what poetry or any other art means. As applied to verse, by Poe and Coleridge, for example, it also exaggerates the function of the brief, concentrated lyric. It is significant to note, nevertheless, how Poe's discussion of the poem parallels certain elements in the description of the mystical state by James. Poe asserts: "I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements are, through a physical necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained through a composition of any great length. After the lapse of half an hour, at the very utmost, it flags—fails—a revulsion ensues and then the poem is, in effect and in fact no longer such." Yet the life devoted to science or philanthropy does not consist exclusively of spasms of discovery or of sacrifices for the sake of others. Nor does the art-lover find satisfaction solely in cameos, small bronzes, sonnets, brief melodies, grave-monuments, and one-act plays, for although intensity distinguishes the culminating moments of the aesthetic experience, not all small works of art are equally and supremely possessed of intensity, and no part of a great work of art, no matter how large, fails to share in it.

It is often believed that intensity is to be found only in romanticism and in romantic arts, but successfully objectified imagination is present in classical and naturalistic works as well as in romantic. The frank reliance on emotion varies in the three major divisions, but it is excited by any successful work of art under adequate conditions, and it is not absent from the satisfaction found in their experience by artists and art-lovers alike. Not all feeling, however, is aesthetic, not even all the feeling aroused by individual works of art, but there is feeling in the aesthetic experience, just as in any other. Really significant works of art are the products of culminating moments in the cultures, of which they survive as the most intrinsically historic records; of culminating moments in the careers of those who create them as well, and they are shared by individuals, not being capable of restriction to a single individual; this experience can be revived and repeated. It is vain to assert that for all men everywhere successful art is never known continuously for more than half an hour, for the mystical state is not really governed by the clock.

Dogmatism and Impression

A new appeal to the mystical sources which yield fresh energy for every radical innovation in art history is clearly to be seen in the impressionist movements in literature, as well as in painting. Impressionism is usually presented as a superior alternative to dogmatism. From the larger point of view, however, the dogmatist is a man who defers to the public by the very fact that he makes his views known in intelligible terms, which can be examined by any member of that public, and his work is published as something offered for public agreement or disapproval. The impressionist, too, although he pretends to speak only for himself, delights to express himself through publication, and his support depends on finding a considerable section of the public like-minded with himself, though relatively inarticulate. Both schools have this in common, however, that their common antagonist is the naturalist with unfounded pretensions to complete, scientific accuracy.

Today, there is a universal dogmatism, whose decrees are infallible and binding on all men. It is physical science. There is a universal religion and it is a complete belief in the unique power of science to disclose the laws to which mankind is completely subject, and possibly to ameliorate our sorry lot. Against this both impressionism and dogmatism in art are a protest. Impressionism asserts the solitude of the momentary self, and its absolute irrelevance; while dogmatism, today sometimes called humanism or classicism, holds that the most important thing in the self is the rational soul which it possesses in common with other men.

Mankind is, after all, what men know best. It is weakening and degrading to confess the omnipotence of old-fashioned physics and retreat to the ephemeral security of the soul's solitude. Within humanity, not as it is, but as it may be, there is something superior to the rigors of a mechanistic universe, which is, after all only its own creation and a rather recent one, and human history is a record of conquest over the environment, gradual, hesitating, and uncertain, but intrinsic and real. In any case, we cannot, like angels, resolve ourselves into purely conceptual machines, nor can we ally ourselves wholly with the earthworm; all that we can now be and do must be done and achieved as the men that we are. But art, any successful work of art, through and in which the aesthetic experience is realized, completely establishes the fact that we can achieve communication with something that is not wholly sensation and not wholly concept, for like us men it has something of both in it, and the object achieved is greater than either for it is a reality that comprehends them both, as does ordinary human life.

Lalo points out that the dogmatist takes opposite sides from the impressionist on three persistent dilemmas: (1) either judgments of value are universal and absolute, or they are entirely subjective; (2) either they emanate from absolute beauty and abstract reason, or they resolve themselves into that part of each individual in which he differs from all others, or his sensitiveness only; (3) either they are eternal or they do not exist. When the issues are thrown into sharp focus in this manner, it is readily seen that such precision, merely to emphasize the contrast, exaggerates the positions of both the impressionists and the dogmatists, and the dilemmas, as is so often the case, are mainly grammatical ones rather than labyrinths from which the human mind cannot escape. With regard to these dilemmas, it may be observed that the criterion of identity is applied practically in terms which are exclusively patterned on the tangible extension of physical objects. To consider individual objects as reduced copies of a permanent, unchanging larger object, somewhere in the sky, is a thoroughly mistaken version of the Platonic theory of the relation between ideas and instances. The only real problem involved is the problem of analogy, which is one of similarities, likeness, identity in senses other than as multiples or fractions of an arbitrary unit for measuring physical extension. The validity of analogy is assumed prior to laying down the principle of identity in the latter sense, and it is one which we must accept and apply on an ultimately mystical basis, whatever the angels may be able to do.

Conclusions

It is, then, no small contribution that art makes to the fullness and security of our experience. Impelled by irrepressible and inexhaustible curiosity, we cannot refrain from speculation with regard to anything of such obvious and immediate interest. But instead of contenting ourselves with an inquiry into the concept of art taken by itself, we do better continually to compare our tentative concepts with art objects. The plastic arts, in particular, give us material which is not only constant and accessible, but is also less apt to lead us into a disastrous error, the confusion of medium with meaning, as the art of literature sometimes does.

We ought also to note that although a few writers have attempted to solve the problem of art by abolishing its terms, it is no real solution of the difficulty when we assert that there is no basic difference between art products and any other material that has been transformed through human effort, or when we say that art has nothing to do with beauty. The history of thought, the chronological sequence of art, and logical analysis of the concept all show that by art we intend what is more precisely termed fine art. The central question therefore is: What are its origins and implications?

Most of the preceding pages have been devoted to an examination of the several important explanations of art, and to a comparison of art objects with those meanings. Through progressive analysis of the more significant doctrines by which art has been rationalized, we have concluded that art is not concerned with anything less than a high and comprehensive value. But the formulas that have prevailed at one time or another are not mere lies or simple errors; each one contains elements of accurate observation and sound understanding, and it remains inadequate because it is partial, elevating a familiar consequence or factor to the rank of a sufficient cause.

An explanation broad enough to cover the different styles of historic art and the formulas adopted simultaneously with those styles must be very general. It may even be unconvincing, if we state such a principle at the very start and proceed to demonstrate it, rather than arriving at it as the result of successive comparisons, which make it the only one that satisfies all the preceding operations. Some recent explanations of art have unsuccessfully tried to preserve the functions and characteristics that can be found in art only on the broadest possible basis, while denying the very grounds upon which art can be distinguished from what is pleasant, rare, or expensive.

It is legitimate to hold that art consists of things that are valued because they are simply pleasant, rare, or expensive, but then it is difficult to set art apart from the other things that possess identical characteristics and functions, so that art is no longer a proper subject for historical record or philosophical discussion. If, however, we view art as a class of products with a genuine chronological sequence, a group of objects radically different in kind from other man-made things, the grounds upon which those distinctions are made must be ultimately Platonic.

The very words fine arts and aesthetics are terms that became popular in the eighteenth century and established in the nineteenth through the influence of Plotinus on the romantic philosophers and critics. The assumptions on which the concepts of fine art and aesthetics rely are, as matters of historical origins and logical analysis, really Platonic. Today, indeed, the principal fields of interest where Platonism survives and provides the essential foundations of theory are art, on the one hand, and Christianity, on the other. Dean Inge has pointed out that Christian theology is simply Platonism applied to the interpretation of the first Christians' beliefs.

The situation forces us to make a choice between two clear options. We can say that there is no possible validity in Platonic metaphysics, whereupon we must abandon art and art history as independent fields of study, and we must discard aesthetics as a separate division of philosophy. We had better say that, with modifications in the superstructure to harmonize it with our existing needs and interests, the Platonic foundation of those studies is still firm.

This familiar explanation claims that the final reality attainable by our minds has three essential characteristics or aspects, of which beauty is one. It is known best through art; it is discovered in nature as yielding potential materials for art. It also clings to the daring but inescapable conviction that works of art afford true and genuine union with the essence of things; this union is conditioned but not determined by the history and capacity of the individual and the social group of which he is a member.

We have already seen that intuitions of beauty do not have to be uniform to be true. Beauty is perceived in contemplation, but it is not the monopoly of a solitary individual shut up within his own sensations. It is a permanent possibility of knowledge and it is accessible in different degrees to those who seek it. At the same time it is not universal in the sense of being identical and uniform in every instance. Unless human beings were separated in space, they could not exist; yet if human perceptions and judgments were simultaneous and uniform, the individuals could not tell themselves apart from one another, nor appreciate their existence as parts of some whole.

To put the matter in another way: In order to see, we must exist as beings separated in space and differing in the degree of our awareness. When we see art objects, if what we see is not simply useful or accurate, we do well to call that which is ours, as well as something that can be shared with others, by the name of beauty. If beauty is not a property of matter and not an illusion of sense, it should be an ultimate idea, and that one which persists together with the good and the true. But if we genuinely believe that there are no ultimate ideas outside the good and the true, we ought to give up our unfortunate habit of using such words as *art, beauty,* and *beautiful.*

As human beings, nevertheless, we are so strangely organized that we are capable of seeing beauty, and our knowledge of it is obtained chiefly through art. Analogy is at bottom a mystical process, but the analogy which we establish through art between things that we make and an abiding reality is a true one. The essence to which we penetrate through works of art is beauty. Through art we have the power to realize, record, and communicate beauty effectively.

The relation that exists between such conclusions and the expressions of Plotinus from which they eventually derive may easily be traced. That philosopher sixteen centuries ago declared:

"Returning to the beginning, let us state at once what constitutes the principle of beauty in material things.

"Certainly there is such a principle and it is perceived by the senses at the very first glance. The soul identifies it as if the soul knew it well, recognizes and welcomes it, and insofar as possible enters into union with it. . . .

"We say, therefore, that the soul, since it is what it is in its very nature and is close to that which actually and essentially is best, whenever it sees anything of its own kind or even suggesting such a relationship, rejoices and is startled with delight, takes its own to itself, and remembers again what it really is and what belongs to it.

"But what resemblance is there between the things that are beautiful here and those that are beautiful there? And if there is likeness, they must be alike. How, indeed, are these things beautiful as well as those?

"It is, we say, because they share in an idea, an eternal form. . . .

"That which sees must be of the same kind and like that which is seen, in order to view it. For never has an eye seen the sun which has not first become like the sun, nor a soul seen the principle of beauty unless it were itself beautiful."

BOOK LIST

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